



THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,874

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(1R50p) 45p

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ARRIVAL IN
PARADISE**

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Sarah Nelson, eight, walking behind the hearse carrying her mother's coffin. She heard the blast from the loyalist bomb that killed her mother, lawyer Rosemary Nelson, as she sat in her school classroom

Paul Faith

'Killed by enemies of justice'

THE FUNERAL yesterday passed over the very spot where the bomb went off on Monday, mutilating Rosemary Nelson's body, sending her silver BMW careering into a wall and creating a new martyr for Irish nationalists.

The cortege started off from her home in Lurgan, Co Armagh, taking the same route as she had on the last journey of her life. The relatives who bore her coffin and the mourners who trudged after it passed over the small hole which was gouged out of the roadway by the blast of the bomb. Scorch marks are visible on the tar around the indentation.

Then they wheeled slowly

out of her oddly English, mock-Tudor housing estate, Ashford Grange, past the remains of the wall where the firemen had carried out the terrible task of cutting her dying body out of the mangled car.

Little bunches of flowers have been deposited at the wall. More bouquets were left at her office, one of them proclaiming: "A beautiful woman with a beautiful vision—peace, equality, justice." Another said: "Murdered by the enemies of justice, equality and freedom."

From Ashford Grange the funeral passed by Tannaghmore primary school where Sarah Nelson, eight, heard the explosion which left her without a



DAVID MCKITTERICK

mother. Outside the school Sarah's classmates lined both sides of the road as the mourners shuffled past in the cold morning sunshine.

Next along the route came black flags, hung out by residents of the working-class Kil-

wilkie estate in tribute to the lawyer who represented so many of them in their skirmishes with officialdom. Rosemary Nelson was seen not just as a highly effective solicitor but also as one prepared to go beyond the orthodox legal role and speak for them in public.

Which is probably why that bomb was placed under her car with such care and such hate. It is almost certain that in targeting her the loyalist assassins thought they might strengthen the Orange cause in the annual Drumcree marching dispute in neighbouring Portadown.

It is also true that they oppose the Good Friday Agreement and want to bring it down.

But at heart the primary motivation for the attack was probably raw sectarianism, the desire to strike at the local Catholic and nationalist community by removing a woman who was fast becoming one of its foremost advocates.

In the face of such hatred, Rosemary Nelson's sons displayed real character and something close to heroism when, inside St Peter's Church, they held their shock and grief in check to speak of their mother.

Eleven-year-old Gavin said proudly: "My mum was a brilliant solicitor and friend, and whenever you were in need of help she was right there by your side. However, we her family

know her as the best mother, wife, daughter and sister anyone could ever wish for."

The priest described her as a tireless worker and called for an independent inquiry into her death. Outside, those unable to get into the church had no need of such an investigation: they nearly all firmly believe the RUC must have had something to do with it.

Overall the mood was stoical and sombre, with a thirst for vengeance in the air. There had been overnight rioting and petrol-bombing in Portadown involving nationalists, loyalists and police, and one mourner, Councillor Brendan McKenna, bore a conspicuous wound.

He was without his usual glasses and instead had one eye covered by a large surgical patch. He had earlier been pictured with blood streaming from his eye, telling the cameras a policeman had struck him: "I was smashed in the face with a baton. He smashed the glasses right into my eye."

RUC Assistant Chief Constable Tom Craig said one of his officers had reported accidentally striking Mr McKenna as he sought to defend himself against a person attacking him. Saying the incident would be investigated, Mr Craig blamed the violence on "sheer drunk aggression".

Thirty eight officers were

injured, though only one was hospitalised.

Many of Northern Ireland's politicians are on their way back from St Patrick's Day festivities and political exchanges in Washington, where they took part in meetings but achieved no breakthroughs. There were two killings while they were away.

The next few weeks will bring crucial talks aimed at making the Good Friday Agreement work. The hope will be that Rosemary Nelson's death, rather than sending them back into their trenches, instead spurs them on to cement an agreement which might prevent more funerals like hers.

Serious concern, page 2

Murdoch escaped UK tax bill

RUPERT MURDOCH's main British holding company, News Corp Investments, has in effect paid no British corporation tax in the past 11 years, despite achieving total profits of £1.4bn in the period, according to a report to be published today.

The disclosure in this week's edition of *The Economist* comes more than three years after an extensive investigation by *The*

BY ROGER TRAPP

Independent revealed that in the previous 10 years News International, owner of *The Times*, *The Sun* and two other national newspapers, earned nearly £1bn in profits (net of operating losses) and had a total tax bill of £11.74m, or just 1.2 per cent.

The report in *The Economist* shows that tax payments in

some years have been offset by rebates in others.

It comes as the Department of Trade and Industry is considering the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the bid for the football club Manchester United by BSkyB, in which News Corp has a 40 per cent stake.

There is nothing illegal about the group's activities. In

response to questions from *The Economist*, Mr Murdoch's US holding company News Corporation said: "News Corporation and its subsidiaries, including News International, prepares and files tax returns in every jurisdiction in which they do business. The company's tax returns and payments are reviewed on a regular basis by relevant tax authorities."

Sir Cliff: 'I'm Blair's holy man'

SIR CLIFF RICHARD says he is to be Tony Blair's unofficial "Christian mouthpiece"—helping to bring a more "Christian dimension" to the millennium celebrations in Britain.

The Prime Minister and his wife, Claire, met Sir Cliff after the Blair's attended one of his concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Mrs Blair is understood to be a long-term fan.

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

Sir Cliff said he had told Mr Blair the millennium festivities should emphasise the Christian nature and include more charitable giving.

"We talked about the spiritual aspect," Sir Cliff told *The Independent*, "and they were right behind what I was saying.

They were very much in favour of making a spiritual statement.

"The Prime Minister is marginally disappointed they can't do something spiritual at the Dome. But he did say he was very much in favour of my making a Christian statement. Let's face it, it's very much easier for someone like myself to make a Christian statement."

The result of the meeting became evident yesterday when the singer announced he would be playing a millennium eve concert in Birmingham, with all the proceeds going to charity.

He said he was not against stars being paid for performing on the night as long as they donated the money to charity.

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Police target race crime

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

THE POLICE IN BRISTOL, the first of a number of London stations to do so, are to be the first to set up a dedicated unit to tackle race crime. The unit will be headed by a senior police officer and will be responsible for co-ordinating the police response to race-related incidents across the city. The unit will also be responsible for monitoring the police response to race-related incidents and for providing a regular report to the Mayor of Bristol. The unit will be the first of its kind in the country and will be a model for other police forces to follow. The unit will be responsible for co-ordinating the police response to race-related incidents across the city. The unit will also be responsible for monitoring the police response to race-related incidents and for providing a regular report to the Mayor of Bristol. The unit will be the first of its kind in the country and will be a model for other police forces to follow.

Hospital 'gambled on heart girl's life'

A WOMAN described yesterday how a hospital took an "unacceptable gamble" with her daughter's life, by moving her from the intensive care unit where she was on a life-support machine to a neighbouring hospital to allow the unit to prepare for a visit by the Secretary of State for Health.

Michelle Cummings, whose daughter Charlotte was born in March 1987 with multiple heart defects, told the public inquiry into the Bristol baby deaths that her daughter was recovering from heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary in June 1988 when the decision to move her was made. She was told it was necessary because of an impending visit by Kenneth Clarke, the then health secretary, and Edwin Currie, the former health minister.

The ministers were due to open a new intensive care unit at the infirmary and the existing one was being closed, although it was unclear yesterday why Charlotte could not have been transferred directly to the new unit.

Mrs Cummings said: "They took her off the life-support machine and, while hand-ventilating her, took her by ambulance to the intensive care unit at the children's hospital but they didn't know we were coming. Her voice faltered as she described how there was no bed or life-support machine for Charlotte in the intensive care unit or the baby unit, so her daughter ended up on the bed of a child who had been taken to theatre for a tonsillectomy. Although Charlotte recovered from that, she died eight months later."

The inquiry panel was shown a document relating to Charlotte's transfer to the children's hospital with the words "arrived - unannounced as usual" on it. The inquiry has already heard from earlier witnesses of problems at the infirmary which go far beyond the failings of the two surgeons, James Wisheart and Janardan Dhasmana, highlighted by the General Medical Council's investigation last year.

Mrs Cummings, 32, is a leading spokeswoman for the Bristol Surgeons' Support Group, which is campaigning to restore the reputation of the two doctors whom the group says have been unfairly penalised for the shortcomings of others. "We believe that Charlotte received the best possible care from Mr Wisheart and his team that was available at the time. He's an incredibly gentle man and extremely dedicated to the families and children in his care."

Earlier, Malcolm Curnow, a leading figure in the Bristol Children's Heart Action Group which campaigned for the public inquiry, described how his one-year-old daughter Verity died after an operation which he had been told was low risk. Weeks after the operation in 1990 he discovered that doctors considered the only hope was a heart-lung transplant. He said he was "devastated" the information had been kept from him. He told the inquiry that if he had known the true risks he would never have consented to the operation. "I feel that consent was obtained fraudulently."

Eight years later, he saw a news item on television about the GMC case which showed pictures of Mr Dhasmana. He had earlier been assured that Mr Dhasmana was not involved in an internal inquiry into the hospital. "It was at that point I knew I had been lied to, and I knew I had been deceived."

The inquiry continues.

By JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

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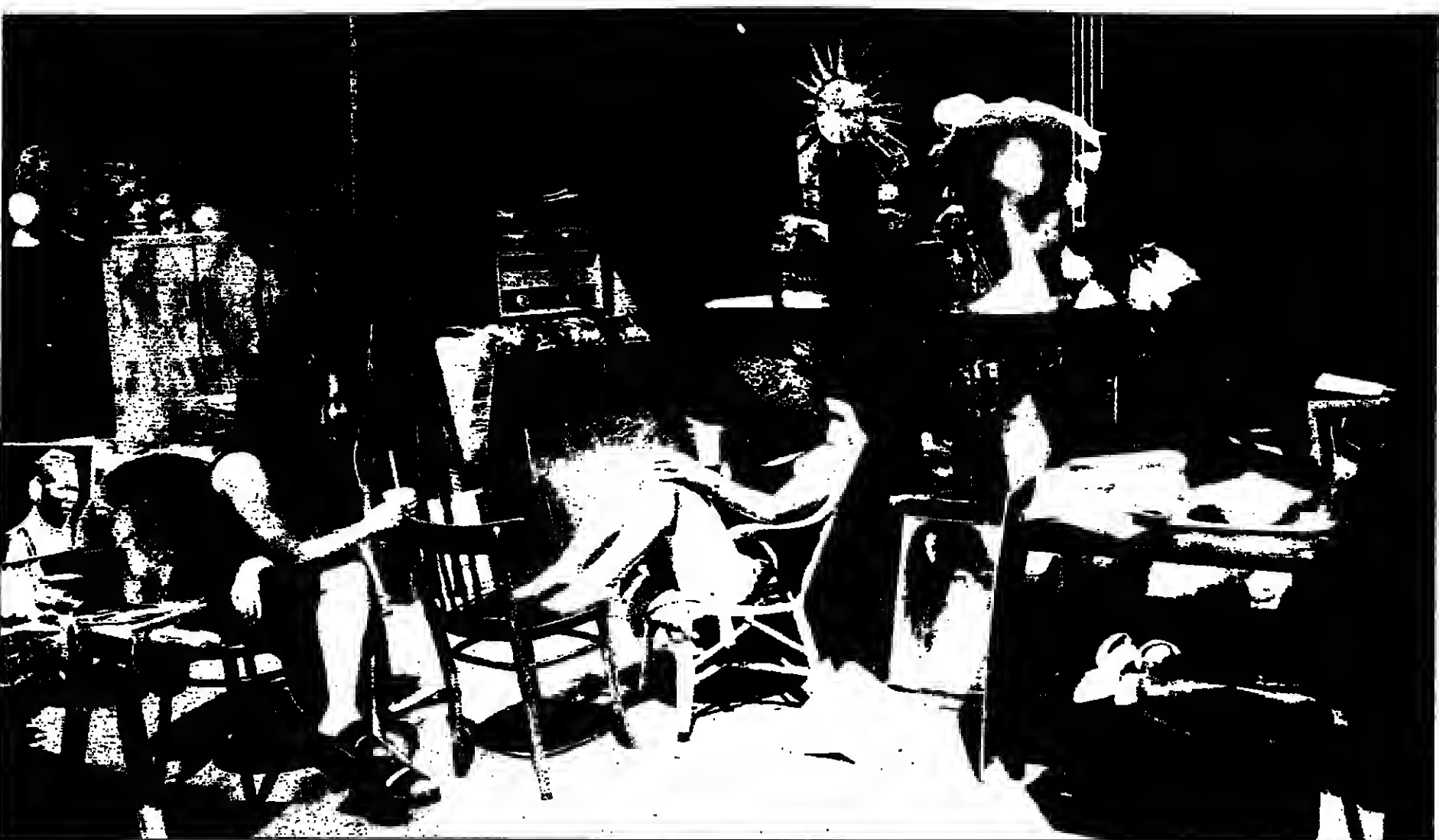
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Shoppers buy second-hand goods for fun, to save money and because they prefer to recycle goods rather than discard them

Lisa Woollett/Format

Second-hand bargains tempt half the nation to become thrifty shoppers

BRITAIN HAS become a nation of thrifty consumers and bargain hunters. Half the population buys second-hand goods such as furniture, clothing and toys, double the number of 10 years ago, according to new research.

A survey of 1,000 people in England, Scotland and Wales, found that those in the South of England were more likely to buy second-hand goods than those in the North or the Midlands.

"The rise in second-hand sales over the last 10 years has been fuelled by the arrival of new methods of selling imported from abroad, namely the arrival of free ads and car boot sales," said David Landau, chairman of Loot, the classified

BY CHERRY NORTON
Social Affairs Correspondent

advertisements paper, who commissioned the independent research. Mr Landau believes that the arrival of classified auctions via the Internet and telephone will further expand the second-hand market.

Consumer experts said that along with the increased convenience of buying second-hand goods there is a growing consciousness that people should not throw things away as readily as they used to.

"We are encouraged to recycle rubbish and this has generated a feeling that we ought to be preserving things," said Sue Keane, a consumer psychologist. "The day of the disposable toaster or hair-dryer has gone."

The numbers of people buying recycled goods varied according to region. Only 39 per cent of those in the North-west of England bought used goods compared to 57 per cent in the South-west and 53 per cent in the South-east.

"Although people in the North tend to earn lower incomes than those in the South, the cost of living is less and overall they have more disposable income and a better lifestyle so they may not feel the need to buy used goods," said Ms Keane.

The market could expand. Some 62 per cent of the survey's respondents said they would consider buying second-hand

goods in the future. A third of people buying second-hand goods are buying more than they did five years ago.

The research showed that people of all ages and backgrounds were buying second-hand goods. Some 62 per cent of people aged 25 to 34 were most likely to buy them, compared with 38 per cent of people aged 65 and over. The increase in buying and selling used goods was greater among people aged 15 to 24 than any other age group.

The most popular second-hand purchase was cars, followed by furniture and furnishings, then electrical goods. Nearly a quarter of those surveyed bought second-hand clothing. Of the 36 per cent who

bought second-hand furniture, nearly a quarter of all their furniture was second-hand.

Fat Cicceri, a nutritionist from London, said that she was both a buyer and a seller. "I use free ads and car-boot sales and have most recently sold items because I have moved flat. I sell household items and car parts and mostly buy car parts as my husband builds cars and collects antique tools. I get some great deals because they are almost new, yet I save on the VAT which makes these items very expensive," she said.

Charity shops, local or free advertisements, and car-boot sales were the most popular places to buy and sell second-hand goods.

The main reasons given for avoiding high street shops were saving money (58 per cent) and finding unusual items (36 per cent). Nearly a third said they believed goods should be recycled.

Nearly one-fifth of those interviewed said they bought second-hand goods for fun. "Second-hand goods are great value for money. I sell furniture and soft furnishings which seem popular," said Ruby Tucker, 68, from Nottingham. "My daughter also buys and sell through the classifieds. The best bargain we've had was a set of pine furniture which my daughter was able to get for a very reasonable price. We always seem to find what we are looking for and it is great fun," she said.

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	Bali	BB	14	1 May - 16 Jun	Heathrow	£614
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'L'Homme Passant la Porte' being unveiled in Chelsea Harbour in central London, where the Design Centre is playing host for three months to a group of sculptures by the leading French artist, Jean Robert Iponstéguy

David Rose

'Anti-adoption culture' to be investigated

THE WATCHDOG body for local authorities is set to investigate criticism that councils are reluctant to allow children in care to be adopted.

The Audit Commission said yesterday that an inquiry into adoption was being considered following requests from MPs. David Davis, chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, wrote to the commission after *The Independent* revealed that ministers plan to act over the "anti-adoption culture" of Britain's social workers.

Mr Davis asked Andrew Foster, the commission's controller, to probe the "dreadfully poor results of keeping children in care, and the enormous variation in the levels of adoption in

different authorities."

Local authorities spend £2.25bn a year on services for children. Although 50,000 are in their care, the number of adoptions has fallen from 21,000 in the seventies to just 2,000 a year.

"This issue has huge implications for social services costs, and even greater consequences for the lives of the children involved," said Mr Davis, Conservative MP for Halesowen and Howden. He said an urgent investigation by the commission into local authority practices would be extremely valuable and underpin future government action and policy.

Mr Davis welcomed the decision by a cabinet committee on the family, chaired by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to launch a review of the adoption laws. Mr Davis believes social workers use existing rules, saying that children should be reunited with their natural parents where possible, as an excuse to avoid adoptions, even though there is often little prospect of them returning home.

Julian Brazier, organiser of an all-party group of MPs which supports adoption, told the commission that 24,000 of the 50,000 children being "looked after" by local authorities had

been in care for at least two years.

Most natural parents who took children back from care successfully did so within six months; very few young people returned home if they had been in care for more than 18 months.

"There is a large pool of children who would benefit from being adopted, while the taxpayer would benefit from a considerable cost saving," he said.

Mr Brazier said young people leaving care were 50 times more likely than other children to go to prison; those who had been in care made up 38 per cent of young offenders and 25 per cent of adult prisoners.

"Youth crime currently costs £1bn per annum, and it can clearly be seen that the care system accounts for a substantial proportion of it," said Mr Brazier.

Last night Mr Brazier welcomed the Cabinet's initiative and said his all-party group would keep up the pressure on ministers to bring in a new Adoption Act before the next general election. "This is not about party politics," said Mr Brazier, Tory MP for Canterbury. "The top priority is the welfare of the children. The best place for a child to grow up is in a caring, loving family."

Rod Hull falls to his death

By PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

ROD HULL'S most famous victim, Michael Parkinson, led the tributes yesterday after news broke that the 63-year-old puppeteer had fallen from the roof of his home and died.

Hull, who became famous in the Seventies with his deranged puppet, Emu, was adjusting the television aerial on the roof of his home in Winchelsea, East Sussex, to get better reception of Manchester United's European Cup match on Wednesday night.

His agent, Laurie Mansfield, said there remained some doubt over the details of the accident: "We're not a hundred per cent certain what happened but what we do know is that he was watching the football. The picture was bad and he went up on the roof to adjust it and fell off. What they're not too sure about is the possibility that he might have had a heart attack, either while he was up there or after he fell."

Mr Mansfield had been with Hull on Tuesday after the star had been in London to attend the first night of a West End play. "We had been talking about plans for the summer. He was planning to go out on the road again with Emu. We also had interest from TV companies to bring him back to



Rod Hull with Emu: He died fixing a TV aerial

television." Michael Parkinson said yesterday: "I am very sad to hear of Rod's death. He was a very charming, intelligent and sensitive man - quite unlike the Emu. The Emu was the dark side of Rod's personality, and very funny, provided it was not on top of you."

Hull was working as a children's entertainer on Australian television when he found the Emu puppet in a props cupboard. He returned to the UK in 1970 and at the height of his popularity had his own television series.

But his career flourished in the late Eighties and in 1994 he was declared bankrupt.

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The holy relic done good in a game for true believers

THE LAST witness to be introduced by David Davies, leading a team giving evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport committee on the staging of sporting events, was present less for his intellectual expertise than for his status as a sanctified object. He was, Mr Davies pointed out, "the only person to score a hat-trick in a World Cup final".

Sir Geoff Hurst was here, in other words, as a holy relic of English footballing success, superstitiously deployed to bring blessings on the Football Association's bid for the 2006 World Cup. Members of the committee were not actually permitted to touch Sir Geoff but they

were allowed to gaze upon him with the devout contemplation usually associated with splinters of the true cross. Understandably, perhaps, he talked in somewhat Messianic tones about the task that lay ahead. This wasn't just an attempt to secure possession of a massively lucrative event, it was "our historic bid", a moment to reassert British ownership of the national game. Sir Geoff believed that it was the duty of all of us to get behind this "national effort". We had invented the cult in the first place and it was time for us to claim back its most important celebration.

Mr Davies was in spiritual mood

too; the FA, he told MPs, had been asking itself "how we can use our game as a power for good" and early missionary work in schools had been successful. But more remained to be done and the World Cup was the best vehicle for revival. When Ronnie Fearn wondered how Wembley's international status would be affected by the destruction of its existing buildings Mr Davies assured him of the continuing appeal of that consecrated ground. Overseas players and teams were all prepared to make the pilgrimage on the basis of name alone; as in modern Jerusalem all trace of the original fabric might

THE SKETCH



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

have disappeared but the site was still imbued with religious power. Matters were a little more down to earth with the next group of wit-

nesses, a team of sportsmen from the Institute of Professional Sport, led by Garth Crooks, the institute's chairman. Around 90 per cent of the answers given to select committees could be roughly grouped under two headings: It's Not Our Responsibility and The Government Should Give Us More Money. The high-minded proselytising of the previous session had disturbed this statistic a little but Mr Crooks and his colleagues set us squarely back on track again with an appeal for the players to be given more of a say. I don't know what position Mr Crooks held during his playing career. (I'm a footballing agnostic, as it happens)

but on the evidence of his performance here he has the natural instincts of a defender. A drive down pitch would come from one of the committee members and Mr Crooks would trap it expertly and make sure that it went no further. He sidestepped his sentence left, jinked it right, turned on himself and retraced his path, expertly dodging full stops and firm conclusions. The footwork was fluent and the poise impressive but the yardage gained was zero.

Less than zero, in truth, as was demonstrated when he ventured an emotional plea to stop the sale of playing fields. He had raised this

concern eight or nine years ago, he said, and was alarmed to find himself still talking about it today. Roger Stott looked puzzled. Wasn't it now illegal to sell playing fields without the express permission of the Secretary of State, he asked. If Mr Crooks had evidence that playing fields were still disappearing he really should lay it before the committee. Mr Crooks realised he might have strayed offside and took advice from behind him. "We would like a little more time to put a document together", he said finally, still dribbling impressively, even though he'd lost possession of the ball some 10 yards back.

Lorry firms 'crippled' by tax increases

THE TORIES stepped up their attack over the increases in fuel and road taxes for the haulage industry yesterday as ministers prepared to meet angry lorry drivers next week.

Gillian Shepherd, the Shadow Transport Secretary, said that the Government's policy was threatening at least 50,000 jobs in the industry because petrol was now the most expensive in Europe. Opening a Tory-led debate on the Government's transport policy, she warned that many companies would be forced to establish themselves abroad to compete with their Continental rivals.

"Of course some haulage companies cannot afford to move abroad. They will go out of business," she said. "The Government has broken their pre-election promises on transport. There have been no immediate benefits for the travelling public. Their answer to transport problems is to tax the motorist off the road and put hauliers out of business."

Lorry drivers have already threatened to stage an organised traffic jam in London on

TRANSPORT
By SARAH SCHAEFER
Political Reporter

Monday to protest against the increases in duty on diesel fuel.

To avert the worsening crisis, Downing Street confirmed that John Reid, the Transport Minister, would discuss the industry's concerns at a special meeting next week.

Similarly, Tony Blair has given his assurance that he understands the problems faced by the industry, and ministers are looking at measures to soften the impact of the increases.

But Dr Reid dismissed suggestions that British hauliers were at a disadvantage compared with Continental firms, saying that they would benefit from the Government's cut in corporation tax.

"Anyone who claims that the policies in the Budget will force hauliers abroad should look carefully at their facts," he said.

"When the whole costs of operating are added up, the vast majority of hauliers would be worse off abroad and there is some evidence that foreign-

owned companies are setting up in the UK. The UK has lower overall costs and less red tape."

The best way to help hauliers was to create a climate of sustainable economic growth and long-term investment in the business.

"The Budget included measures which benefit hauliers. We froze road tax for 98 per cent of all lorries, we cut corporation tax, we doubled the maximum road tax concession for reduced pollution lorries to £1,000 and we increased the duty incentive to use ultra-low sulphur diesel and cleaner road fuel gases."

While Steven Norris, the Road Haulage Association chief, welcomed the meeting with Dr Reid, he made clear that this was a matter for the Treasury.

"The Government must give an indication that there will be genuine review of the draconian rates of taxation that are crippling the industry," he said.

Eddie Stobart, Britain's best-known lorry company, based in Carlisle, Cumbria, has said that it will register up to half its vehicles abroad as a result of the rises in excise duty.



Eddie Izzard (left) with the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, at the launch of the Gift Aid 2000 scheme in London yesterday

John Voos

Comic helps launch Brown's charity scheme

CROSS-DRESSING comedian Eddie Izzard yesterday donated £40,000 to charity to launch a new Treasury scheme to boost charitable giving.

From today Izzard will be starring in a series of high-profile television and press advertisements to promote the Gift

TAXATION
By COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Aid 2000 scheme, which allows tax relief for donations of £100 a year or more.

The Government hopes that it will encourage young people,

who make one-off donations to charities like Comic Relief, to become regular givers. The Inland Revenue will lift basic rate tax on the donation, so that every £100 donated will be worth £122 to charity.

It is aimed at countering criticism that the success of the

National Lottery has led to a steep fall in the money going directly to charities, particularly among young people.

The advertisements will be reinforced with reminders on cinema tickets and beer mats.

Launching the campaign yesterday the Chancellor, Gor-

don Brown said: "What makes it even more special is that if you give the taxman will give as well making your contribution go further."

For more details of Gift Aid 2000, call 0845-075 2000

Leading article.
Review page 3

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'Real people' must set interest rates - Clarke

KENNETH CLARKE yesterday called for a radical overhaul of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee to ensure it was staffed by industrialists and City businessmen.

The former Conservative chancellor said that Bank officials and advisers should be removed from the membership of the MPC and replaced by people with experience of the "real economy". Mr Clarke also said that the committee should take into account jobs and growth as well as inflation when it was making crucial decisions on interest rates.

In evidence to the House of Lords Treasury Select Committee, he said that the overriding aim of economic policy should be steady, sustainable growth and that "everything else is subordinate".

In a scathing attack on the committee, Mr Clarke claimed that it had made itself look "completely ridiculous" last year when it increased rates at a time when the economy was heading for a soft landing.

ECONOMY
By PAUL WAUGH
Political Correspondent

Although the MPC had redeemed itself by cutting rates continuously in recent months, it was, he said, still "slavishly devoted" to "pretty useless" economic models drawn up by the Treasury in the Eighties that were irrelevant today.

"To ensure genuine reform, the committee's membership should be widened to include up to eight outsiders such as industrialists, City businessmen and commentators with a 'good feel for the markets', he said. There was "no reason whatever" for advisers and officials from the Bank of England to sit on the MPC, which should be reformed to resemble the US Federal Reserve or the Bundesbank.

"The officials should still be allowed to feed advice to the committee, but should not sit on what is currently a 'wholly bureaucratic structure'."

"My criticism is that by their

membership and approach, they detach themselves from what's happening in the real economy. As I tried to be a real economy chancellor, I think it's a very unreal Monetary Policy Committee we have," Mr Clarke said.

Echoing comments by leading trade unionists worried about the impact of high interest rates on industry, Mr Clarke said that the committee should have regard to the wider economy. He accepted that the dominant element in the remit of the MPC had to be price stability, but stressed that living standards, wealth creation and jobs should also be taken into account. "I think it should have a wide regard to what's happening in macroeconomic policy generally," he said.

Mr Clarke said he would have cut interest rates still further this month as he had a "gloomy outlook" of the world economy. "My sense is that more bad news is on the way and severe global slowdown is an imminent risk," he said.

MPs get debate on Lawrence inquiry

POLICE
By SARAH SCHAEFER

THE STEPHEN Lawrence inquiry will be subject of a full-day debate, the Commons leader Margaret Beckett announced yesterday. MPs will debate Sir William Macpherson's damning report, which accused the Metropolitan Police of institutional racism, on 29 March.

The Government, notably the Home Secretary Jack Straw, is likely to come under attack after a list of police informants were included by mistake in the report, many of whom will have to be re-housed as a result. Mr Straw attracted further criticism when his deputy, Paul Boateng, gave a Commons statement on the matter because he was in France on "private business".

There was also criticism over an earlier leak of the inquiry's conclusions and by the reversal after 24 hours of an injunction to gag the media.

Sainsbury's GM meetings

SCIENCE MINISTER Lord Sainsbury of Turville met the director of a company involved in GM food research in which he had an interest "a number of times". Stephen Byers the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said.

Modified feed

ALMOST FOUR million tons of imported soya and maize feed purchased by livestock farmers in 1997 and 1998 would have been derived from genetically modified crops, Agriculture minister Jeff Rooker said.

Prison suicides

TWICE AS many prisoners are committing suicide than 10 years ago, Home Office minister George Howarth said. The number

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

of self-inflicted deaths has risen almost every year, from 37 in 1986 to 83 last year, he said.

New Deal cost

THE COST to the taxpayer of each young person getting a job under the New Deal is around £1,000, the Employment minister Margaret Hodge said.

Today's agenda

Commons: 9.30am
■ Referendums Bill, second reading.
■ Cheques (Scotland) Bill, second reading.
■ Short debate on Tibet Lords: Not sitting

Literacy action to go ahead

The Government is determined to push ahead with its national literacy strategy despite the reservations expressed by teachers, according to the School Standards minister, Estelle Morris. "It's not necessarily about what teachers think," she said.

No tears over Europe crisis

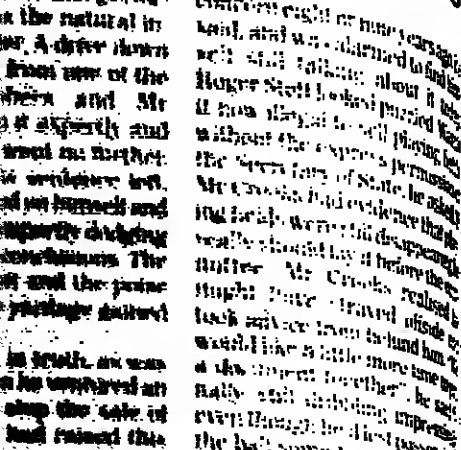
Dennis Skinner, the Labour MP for Bolsover, called for the scrapping of the European Commission over its current crisis. He told MPs: "The so-called crisis didn't result in people like me shedding any tears. The fact that you could see here, the core of the Common Market - you could actually see it beginning to break up."

THE HOUSE



Tories attack cuts in 'bobbies'

The Government came under attack by the Tories for cutting police manpower and closing police stations across Britain. The shadow Home Secretary, Sir Norman Fowler, said that government policy in the battle against crime was going in "exactly the wrong direction" because, at a time when people wanted to see more bobbies on the beat, they were getting fewer.



...the ... 10 yards back



charity scheme

I support the position
 of the Executive group
 in opposing the proposed
 merger proposal.
 The Executive group will be
 of great assistance in
 the merger process.
 The Executive group will
 be of great assistance in
 the merger process.
 The Executive group will
 be of great assistance in
 the merger process.

t set larke

inquiry

POLICE

The police are making inquiries as to whether or not the man who was seen at the scene of the shooting was a member of the Black Panther party.

any nation
ahead

**Wages over
the years**

Between the years 1950-1960, incomes in the top 10 per cent of the population rose by 100 per cent, while incomes in the bottom 10 per cent rose by only 10 per cent.



Pulborough Brooks nature reserve in West Sussex, where the RSPB has restored water meadows to create a refuge for waterfowl and wading birds. *Chris Gomersall*

New danger to wetlands

GOVERNMENT RED tape is putting the country's most important water meadows in peril, a leading wildlife campaigner claimed yesterday.

Graham Wynne, the chief executive of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, told a conference in London that a lack of co-ordination between Government departments and agencies was leaving many of these areas too dry for birds and wild animals. He said wetlands were a vital part of the countryside, controlling floods, providing grazing and playing host to a wide variety of wild plants and animals.

Surveys by the society have shown that species such as snipe and redshank had suffered declines of more than 50 per cent in the past 10-15 years. Once a common farmland bird, snipe are now almost extinct outside wildlife reserves. On the Somerset Levels their numbers have dropped by 79 per cent in 20 years. The RSPB

By AMANDA BROWN

believes farmers' preference for dry ground has left land too hard for wading birds like the snipe to feed their young.

Mr Wynne said landowners were given grants to raise water levels in Somerset but the job was not being done properly. "A new study shows that a combination of neglect, sluices not checked for leaks and even sabotage means public money is literally going down the drain. There have more frequent checks on sluices and water levels."

The RSPB had called the conference to urge Government departments and agencies to work together to save the valuable wetlands. The society said that eight years ago the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods ordered the drawing up of water level management plans but fewer than half the schemes were completed by the 1996 deadline.

'Terrorist methods' of green activists

ARMED CAMPAIGNERS and anti-road protesters were accused yesterday of constructing 'battledfield bunkers' and acting as a 'quasi terrorist mode', by a team of police inspectors.

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary called for new powers to prevent so-called 'eco-warriors' from setting dangerous 'boby traps' for police when 'digging tunnels, and building tree houses at protest sites.'

A report by HMIC, published yesterday, said: 'The announcement of any new construction project that is remotely controversial heralds a period of "defensive building", such as the construction of elaborate bunkers, trenches and tunnels, often containing highly dangerous boby traps posing considerable danger to those involved.'

"A number of recent protest sites have seen even more elaborate and complex 'defences' being built. Guidance available on the Internet describes how to spike trees to cause injury to anyone trying to cut the tree, and, for example, how to mix sawdust and debris into concrete making any cutting a potentially dangerous operation.

"The result is a structure that resembles a battlefield bunker. Existing legal remedies to prevent this fortification process are limited. It is only a matter of time before someone sets a protester, bullie, security of police or police officer - is seriously injured," it adds.

HMIC suggests new legislation should be introduced to prevent this fortification process which goes far beyond the bounds of reasonable protest". The Home Office is to consider whether such legislation is needed.

The report, "Keeping the Peace: Policing Disorder" goes on to claim: "There is evidence that some elements operate in cell-like structures in a quasi-terrorist mode to keep secret their

movements and intentions. The inspectors say the police must respond by gathering intelligence and distributing it nationally and locally.

As revealed in *The Independent* in November, a national police unit is being set up to track green activists at public demonstrations.

The intelligence squad, which will use information from a variety of sources including Special Branch officers and MI5, will compile profiles of protesters and organisations considered to be potentially troublesome. The unit will also draw up action plans that chief constables can introduce to head off disorder.

The National Public Order Intelligence Unit will be based at Scotland Yard. The new outfit will incorporate the Animal Rights National Index, which lists details of protesters. Yesterday's report notes: "It is planned that public order intelligence officers in each force area will have access to the unit's secure network."

There has been growing concern among police chiefs at the number and level of sophistication of green protests. There are currently demonstrations at proposed building developments at Manchester airport, a private toll road around Birmingham, and Crystal Palace in south London.

Martin, a spokesman for the direct action group Earth First!, said: "The call for new powers is a gross over-reaction to 15 years' totally harmless people setting boby traps." Campaigners have to live in these places so are hardly going to install some thing that could be a danger".

Philip Lymbrey, of Compassion in World Farming, said: "If democracy people have a right to protest and express their opinion."

English and Scots in race-bias tussle

CASE brought by an English couple who claim they were the victims of racial discrimination by a pub landlord and his wife in a Scottish village was adjourned yesterday after a legal wrangle over a similar case.

Lawyers for the publican and his wife, Colin and Jacqueline Pearson, called for the action to be suspended until another case involving the English commentator Mark Douglas against BBC Scotland has concluded. Mr Souster, an Englishman, claims a racial motive was to blame for his failure to get a job but an appeal has been lodged at the Court of Session to rule whether there are ethnic differences between English and Scottish people and whether the 1976 Race Relations Act is applicable.

However, at Dumfries Sheriff Court yesterday, Sheriff Kenneth Barr said he could not hold up the action against the Pearsons to await the outcome of a case which could "go on for years", and he ordered a re-sumption on 28 May. The Pearsons are being sued for £20,000 compensation by Frank and Sandra Walters who allege they were forced to quit their home in Clarendonfield, near Annan, because of anti-English bias.

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A poster at a London bus stop spreading news of 'The Word', the capital's first international literary festival

Mark Childers

New literary festival aims to take books to high-rises

BY BOYD TONKIN
Literary Editor

CATCH THE 22 bus into the City of London this Sunday, and your journey might end in the company of Joseph L. Heller. The legendary American novelist will be reading and talking at the Barbican Centre - one among scores of high-profile events during "The Word", London's first international festival of literature, which starts today and runs until 28 March.

Five Nobel Prize winners will join more than 60 other authors, drawn in equal numbers from the UK and abroad, in an ambitious London-wide, literary

funded programme of 350-plus events. The Word embraces club nights, comedy classes and a movie-tile masterclass as well as readings, discussions and debates.

Among the star turns, Doris Lessing will appear in Woodford Green, Walter Mosley in Lewisham, Germaine Greer in Battersea, and Margaret Atwood in Sutton, while even the reclusive John le Carré breaks cover for an event at the Peacock Theatre in Holborn.

However, if you want to call the central bus office and make a booking, think again. There isn't one: all tickets will be sold by local venues, whether it be the Enfield Civic Centre for Sue Townsend and Terry Pratchett, or the Surbiton Assembly Rooms for Peter Carey. The reasons for this absence of a central core help explain The Word's special mission, and why the director Peter Florence, who also runs the Hay-on-Wye literary festival, thinks it can find an annual niche in the capital's cultural diary.

Mr Florence has designed "a festival that reaches across the city rather than simply concentrating on Soho or the South Bank". The Word plans to take writers to the people, in verdant suburb or high-rise estate. It has no wish to replicate the "pilgrimage model" of most festivals, in which avid readers make a trek to see their favourite authors in some pleasant country town. This aim means, in many cases, an attempt to match the fare on offer with the varied interests of a culturally complex metropolis.

"It's significant," Mr Florence said, "that one of the strongest line-ups consists of two writers from Nigeria and a guy from St Lucia": Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Derek Walcott, who read in an all-star

gig at the Hackney Empire on Monday. Meanwhile, a series of short films on Carlton Television will try to reach potential punters who might never have sampled a writers' event. "What we really need to do is to bring the festival into the Trevor McDonald slot," Mr Florence said.

In fact, The Word is building on the work of other innovators. During the Eighties, the literary entrepreneur Tony Fairweather first located a large live audience for black writers when he brought figures like Alice Walker to inner-city venues. The writer and arts consultant Ken Worpole, who ran pioneering writing groups in east London, points out the shifting combination of "location, audience and writer always make a unique occasion". One poet may fill a hall in Catford but empty a bar in Covent Garden; another, vice versa. Mr Worpole is delighted, for instance, that Turkey's greatest living novelist, Orhan Pamuk, will be coming to Hackney, in the heart of London's Turkish community. But was it some programmer's wicked sense of fun that dispatched Deborah Moggach and Wendy Perle's discussion of sex in fiction to the herb-crawling purlieus of Streatham?

Mr Worpole said The Word "is going to be a bit of a boost for the library service in London", which provides many of its sites. But an annual jamboree can hardly make up for the long-term decline of local library services. Guy Daines, head of professional practice at the Library Association, reveals there were 56 branch closures in London between 1987 and 1997. Opening hours have fallen by 22 per cent in the same period, and librarians' real book-purchasing power by 45 per cent. The Word may open new minds to modern literature, but some of those converts will return to their local libraries and find the door to further reading firmly shut.

£10,000 from 'British Nobel' goes to Omagh

THE IRISH novelist William Trevor is to hand over £10,000, awarded to him as part of a prize for a lifetime's literary achievement, to a young person from Omagh to help them build their own writing career.

Mr Trevor yesterday became the fourth winner of the David Cohen British Literature Prize, dubbed the "British Nobel" because it is awarded for a body of, rather than a single, work.

The prize consists of £30,000 for the author, plus £10,000 to commission work which will encourage young writers and readers. Announcing that he would be giving the bursary to someone from his native Ireland, Mr Trevor, 70, said at a ceremony in London last night: "I have based this idea on my own indigence at a similar time of

my life. It is, I believe a time when creative people need most financial support."

Dr Tess Hurson accepted the £10,000 bursary on behalf of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, saying: "This is a very generous gesture to a town which attracted worldwide attention last year for the most awful reasons. William Trevor's award looks to the future; it encourages creativity and will provide a wonderful opportunity for a young person to pursue a literary career."

Mr Trevor has twice won the Whitbread Award: for *The Children of Dymouth* (1976) and *Fools of Fortune* (1983), and in 1984 *Felicia's Journey* was the Whitbread Book of the Year.

PRIZES GALORE

THE DAVID COHEN British Literature Prize is one of 225 literary prizes which will be awarded this year. Among them are:

- The Booker Prize, worth £20,000, won last year by Ian McEwan for *Amsterdam*.
- The Whitbread Book of the Year, worth £21,000, has been won for two years running by Ted Hughes: last year for *Tales from Ovid* and this year for *Birthday Letters*.
- The Orange Prize, worth £30,000, is open to women only. The most recent winner was Carol Shields with *Larry's Party*.
- The Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction, worth £30,000, is the only

prize devoted to non-fiction

- The International Impac Dublin Literary Award is worth £85,000. The most recent winner was Herta and Paul Amirian for *The Land of Green Plums*.
- The Forward Poetry Prize, worth £16,000 in total, Ted Hughes won the main prize last year with *Birthday Letters*.
- Among the more obscure prizes are the Bird Book of the Year award, the Thumping Good Read award and the Management Consultancies Association Book Prize. And for Scottish writers there is the Stakis Prize.

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PHILIP HENSHER



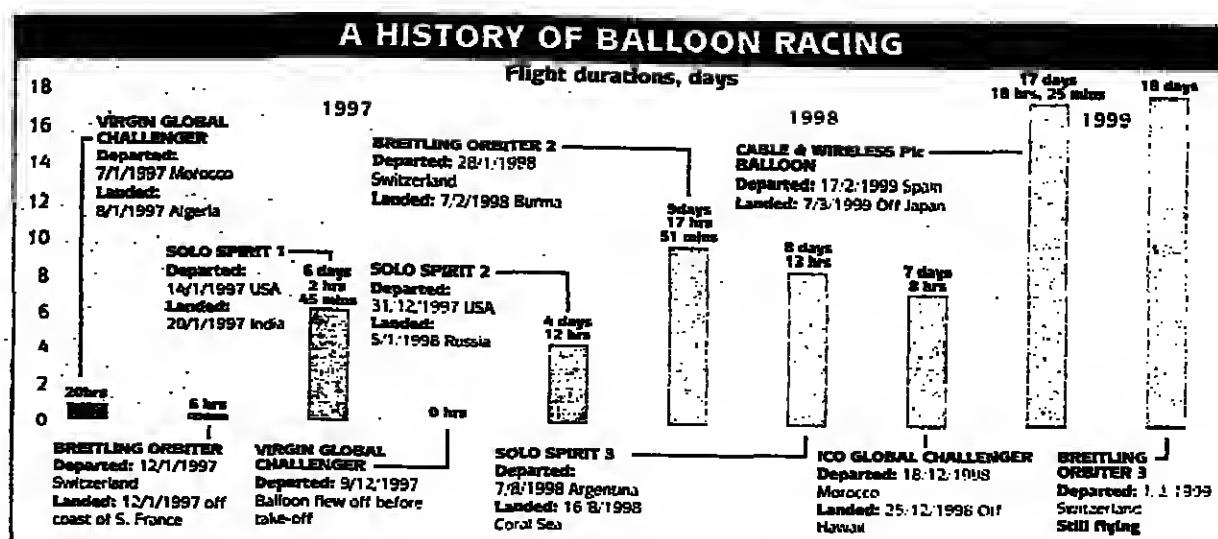
£4m! My God, is that all the debt she can acquire in 98 years?

IN THE FRIDAY REVIEW PAGE 4

Hopes soar as balloon nears journey's end



The Breitling Orbiter 3, pictured after take-off in the Alps, is on course to circumnavigate the globe tomorrow



TWO PILOTS attempting to be the first to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon were last night on course to break the record for the longest balloon flight.

By the early hours of this morning Brian Jones, from Wiltshire, and his Swiss co-pilot, Bertrand Piccard, will have been in the air for 18 days, beating the previous record of 17 days and 18 hours set by the Cable & Wireless team earlier this month.

If all goes according to plan, the Breitling Orbiter 3, which was last night heading out across the Atlantic, will cross 9.27 degrees longitude over Mauritania tomorrow evening, setting the circumnavigation record.

The pair had been hoping to reach the finish line a little ear-

BY KATE WATSON-SMITH

lier hut strong winds on Wednesday night caused the balloon to drift in a southerly direction and they lost half a day. During the night the balloon also used more fuel than on previous nights.

Alan Noble, the Breitling flight director, said he hoped it was a one-off problem caused by the balloon passing through a few clouds and that there would still be enough fuel to complete the flight.

Luc Trullemans, a Belgian meteorologist who is helping to guide the pilots on their journey, said: "The balloon had deviated too far south and was not following the winds we had planned for it. The adventure was nearly over."

"I said to people around me

in the control room at midnight GMT that six more hours flying like that and it would have been over."

He added that Mr Piccard, 41, had undergone hypnosis over the radio to help him overcome the stress of the journey.

"Bertrand spoke under hypnosis to a medical friend in Lausanne who boosted his morale. He also got more oxygen and the stress diminished," he said.

Victoria Osborne, a spokeswoman for the team, said Mr Jones, 51, and Mr Piccard were both now extremely tired but quietly confident.

"We are calculating how much fuel they have, and whether, if there is enough to complete the journey, they will be able to fly on to Egypt and

land there in daylight," she said.

-We were quite worried about them on Wednesday because they had spent six days crossing over the Pacific and had no communication with us for four days because of technical problems.

"They were feeling very strained but after being able to talk to their wives and have a sleep while they were over land they started feeling much better and are ready to set off across the Atlantic."

The balloon was travelling at just over 55 knots yesterday, and speeding up as it approached the Atlantic winds, at an altitude of almost 35,000ft.

The pilots have flown more than 20,825 miles since taking off from Château d'Oex, in Switzerland on 1 March.

Students say lecturers not up to the job

STUDENT LEADERS insisted that tough new standards for university teaching be made compulsory yesterday. They accused academics of "watering down" a proposed gold standard for lecturers and said there were too many academics with poor teaching skills.

BY BEN RUSSELL,
Education Correspondent

Ron Dearing (now Lord Dearing) as part of his landmark report on the future of higher education which led to the introduction of tuition fees. The Dearing report insisted that tough guarantees on standards were an essential part of the tuition-fees package.

To win membership, academics will have to compile a portfolio of their lecture notes and other written work, proving they are competent teachers. They will also have to keep their teaching skills up to date.

Under current proposals membership of the institute will be voluntary, although many universities plan to insist on accreditation for new staff.

Andrew Pakes, the NUS president, said: "Students will demand high standards because cash is being paid over the table."

"They are complaining more because quality and standards are essential. I think there is large scale bad teaching practice. It's not to say lecturers are bad at their subjects, but there has been very little investment in how they communicate that knowledge. All students have the

right to teaching and support from motivated and well-resourced staff. They also have the right to quality."

Liz Allen, a member of the institute's council and an official of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, accepted that the current proposals may be too complex, but said a properly run national system would

be accepted by the majority of the staff. She said: "This is something that should happen with the support and co-operation of academic staff and being too heavy handed would be a mistake. It is very difficult to say to people who have been doing a job very well for 20 or 25 years that they suddenly have to jump through all these hoops."

■ University lecturers will meet

University lecturers will meet employers today for the start of talks on their 10 per cent pay claim. The Association of University Teachers, which represents staff in the "old" universities, has threatened to disrupt examinations and university entrance in the summer if their claim is not met.

Report shows new risk to diet-fad girls

TEENAGE GIRLS who follow strict diets are 18 times more likely to develop an eating disorder than those who eat whatever they like. Even those girls who diet moderately are at five times the risk, according to researchers who studied 2,000 male and female students aged 14 and 15 over three years.

The findings, published in the *British Medical Journal*, suggest that exercise is the safest way for teenagers to control their weight. This is confirmed by a second study, published yesterday in the *United States Journal Archives of Paediatrics*, showing that television is linked with the growth of obesity among American teenagers.

The US study of 1,300 students showed that a school-based program which aimed to cut down television viewing to less than two hours a day increased activity among the stu-

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

dents and reduced their exposure to commercials for sweets and junk food. Over two years, obesity fell among the girls who went to schools involved in the programme (from 23.6 per cent to 20.3 per cent) and rose among those at control schools where it did not run (from 21.5 to 23.7 per cent). Among boys there was little change.

The *BMJ* study, conducted in Australia, found that 8 per cent of the girls had followed strict diets and a further 60 per cent had dieted at a moderate level. Over one year the strict dieters had an almost one in five chance of developing an eating

Psychiatric problems were also found to be strongly associated with the development of

eating disorders, raising the risk almost sevenfold.

Professor George Patton and his colleagues, from the University of Melbourne, say that it is possible that the link between strict dieting and eating disorders exists because in those who start severe dieting a process leading to the development of an eating disorder has already begun. However, they conclude: "In adolescent weight control, promotion of exercise rather than restriction of dietary intake may prove less of a risk in the development of eating disorders."

The authors say previous research had suggested that taking part in sports, especially those that required thinness such as gymnastics, might increase the risk of eating disorders. However, they found that daily participation in sports did not raise the risks above those already associated with dieting.

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Clinton emerges from press purdah

THIS AFTERNOON, President Bill Clinton will do something he has not done for almost a year: walk solo into the East Room of the White House and submit himself to unscripted questions from reporters.

The presidential press conference, a genre that the White House press corps regards as tantamount to a constitutional right for the Fourth Estate, has been suspended since the Monica Lewinsky scandal became a threat to Mr Clinton's presidency. Today's press conference, which is scheduled to last an hour but on past performance could go on much longer, is a clear effort by the President and the White House to draw a line under the Lewinsky affair and the impeachment drama that followed.

The last such press conference took place last April, three months after the first White House panic about the Lewin-

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

sky scandal. Then, reporters' insistent questions about the veracity of the President's denials demonstrated the affair would not go away and discouraged the White House from risking another media free-for-all.

Since then, relations between the White House and the US media, especially the Washington media, have been fraught to non-existent.

Mr Clinton was not completely isolated, but every occasion was stage-managed to minimise spontaneity. The President appeared in tandem with other state leaders, or at scripted events in the White House or the Rose Garden where he could choose to take questions or not - and frequently chose not to.

His spokesmen - Mike McCurry until last autumn and, since then, Joe Lockhart -

have come in for ferocious criticism for being distant, uncommunicative and, at times, plain inaccurate. Mr McCurry, who often looked awkward at the podium and professed to knowing nothing about the Lewinsky affair, has admitted since leaving the White House that he was unhappy with the lack of information coming from the Oval Office, but tried never knowingly to lie.

Mutual resentment built up. Officials at the White House, where Mr Clinton - it transpired - had repeatedly lied to senior aides, objected to what they saw as intrusive and hostile questions from overbearing reporters with ambitions to fell a president. Reporters accused the White House of stonewalling and - after Mr Clinton's confession in August - of lying. The White House press corps is used not only to a degree of accessibility that reporters in

Britain can only envy, but also to a cosy system of give and take that borders on patronage.

Since Mr Clinton's acquittal by the Senate two months ago, the White House has been loosening his leash. When he travelled to Mexico on Valentine's Day, he and Hillary Clinton handed out chocolates to the press. During his recent visit to Central America, the President attended two informal dinners with select members of the media. Last weekend, he answered questions shouted by reporters on a visit to Arkansas.

Today's event is the culmination of these "normalisation" efforts. It will show not only whether the President is ready to face the media, but whether Washington reporters are ready to consign the Lewinsky affair and Mr Clinton's duplicity to history.

Leading article,
Review, page 3



Russian prosecutor Yuri Skuratov with his wife Yelena. A video of him with prostitutes has been broadcast AP

Russians relish sex and video 'skandal'

RUSSIANS RELISH political "skandals" more than any other blood sport, and the latest to surface in the feral world of Moscow politics is a classic. The chief exhibit is a secretly recorded videotape, which purports to show the country's top prosecutor caving in with two young women.

Such scenes ought to be a fatal blot on the curriculum vitae of one of Russia's most senior officials. As Prosecutor General, Yuri Skuratov is in the front line of law enforcement, a medal-bedecked warrior in the battle against corruption.

That is not how it turned out. In the early hours yesterday, a clip of the film was screened on a national television station. There was no sign of the spotless military uniform that Mr Skuratov, 46, is fond of wearing. Instead the portly stud was seen in a pair of underpants.

The screening came as the prosecutor was confident that his job was secure, for the first time since being forced into offering his resignation six weeks ago. Only hours earlier, he had strode out of the Federation Council, parliament's upper house, after it voted to refuse to accept his decision to quit.

The council, made up of powerful regional leaders, was shown the videotape before the vote, but decided that what the prosecutor may have done within the walls of someone else's bedroom was his own business.

While this may appear to be a refreshing example of Russian liberalism, the reality is less attractive. The Prosecutor General's survival revealed only that the upper house was intent on humbling the sick and meddling Boris Yeltsin. The President wanted the Prosecutor General out; the council, which has the final word, was having none of it. So it delivered Mr Yeltsin's second

BY PHIL REEVES
in Moscow

defeat by parliament in just over six months, providing further evidence of his wasted political sinews.

There is another issue, Russia's regional heavyweights in the Federation Council have plenty of their own skeletons. They doubtless hope for the same generosity from the Prosecutor General that they have accorded him. Mr Skuratov's fight against crime will now be tougher still.

Not that he was making much headway. His term has been marked by a failure to crack any high-profile cases - neither the murder of the television executive Vladimir Listyev, nor that of Dmitri Kholodov, an investigative journalist blown up by a briefcase bomb, nor that of the democratic parliamentarian, Galina Staravolova, gunned down in St Petersburg last year.

Mr Skuratov disagrees. This week he portrayed himself as a victim of his own intrepid labours. Complaining of "illegal bugging" and "interference with private life", he linked his attempted ouster with sensitive operations by his department. It has been looking at how Russia's Central Bank transferred foreign reserves into a Jersey account, and into the activities of the tycoon Boris Berezovsky.

But before he can pursue these matters, Mr Skuratov must fend off a counter-attack by a wounded Mr Yeltsin, who has launched a Security Council inquiry into his conduct.

But one case looks likely to forge ahead. Mr Skuratov's office yesterday said it might prosecute the RTR channel, which screened the offending clip. The channel had "jeopardised the Prosecutor General".

US settles Cuban bill

A JUDGE in the United States yesterday ordered that more than \$6.2m (£3.8m), owed to Cuba by US telephone companies, be paid instead to the families of three Cuban-Americans killed when their planes were shot down by Cuban jets in 1996. The families of three of the pilots killed in the attack won a judgment of \$187m against the Cuban government and the Cuban Air Force in 1997 but had been unable to collect it. Judge James Lawrence King, who made the 1997 judgment, ruled

BY FIONA BELL

yesterday that the families could seize Cuban assets in the US, including payments owed to Cuba by telephone companies doing business with the island. More than \$4.1m should come from AT&T and about \$1.05m from MCI International.

Cuba's state telephone company severed most of its links to the US in February because US telephone companies had been withholding payments pending the court's decision.

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Albanians sign up to empty peace

WAS IT drama or farce? The Kosovo Albanians signed their autonomy agreement here last night - with not a Serb present and even the Russian negotiator refusing to add his name as a witness.

"Signing up for peace," the Americans deviously called it. But it must have been the only treaty in Europe to be proclaimed a success after being signed by one side and ignored by the other.

Balkan envoy Christopher Hill was the best that the Americans could produce for this odd, stilted performance at which the four Kosovo delegates - Ibrahim Rugova and the military leader Ibrahim "the Snake" Thaci in the middle - dutifully signed their documents in total silence.

Austrian diplomat Boris Petritsch witnessed the signatures for the European Union. But no one said a word about the empty chair in which Boris Mayorski of Russia should have sat. "It takes two to tango," he had announced on Wednesday. He could say that again.

The Kosovo peace talks were effectively at an end. But what next? There was talk of another deadly warning ("time is running out"), "those responsible will be held fully accountable" from our Foreign Secretary, Lieutenant-General Sir Robin Cook. But you only had to watch James Rubin outside the Avenue Kieher conference centre, as the French riot police and plain-clothes flics glowered at the rows of television crews, to know we are not going to war. Not yet.

BY ROBERT FISK
in Paris

"It's hard to predict" what the future holds, announced the US State Department spokesman, as immaculate a major-domo as we could expect to find in his immaculate black suit and bright red tie behind the police barricade. "Nobody wants to pursue military means."

Then later, after we had been told about the Kosovars' "courageous decision to choose peace", Mr Rubin let the cat out of the bag: "Clearly the West, the international community is prepared to go the extra mile for peace."

You bet they are. At a Berlin summit, which other European Union members only heard about from the press, General Cook and his French and German opposite numbers pondered the alternatives to war. Having won first prize from the Americans for signing an agreement that leaves them a long way short of independence, Messrs Thaci, Rugova and their Kosovar colleagues are being invited to Washington for talks with Supreme Commander Madeleine Albright.

Which will keep them quiet while the Serbs continue to bombard, burn and loot the villages of Kosovo's Drenica region. So much for the "peace" that Mr Rubin was trying to proclaim yesterday.

Then there is the idea privately touted by the Americans that the Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeni Primakov, might visit Belgrade early next



Veton Surroi, spokesman of the Kosovar delegation, briefs journalists before the signing ceremony in Paris

AFP

week for another tilt at the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosovic, the man whom even Richard Holbrooke couldn't break. This might constitute "the extra mile for peace" of which Mr Rubin spoke so

blithely yesterday. So would a visit by Mr Cook and Hubert Vedrine of France, though they would hate to be told to go home, as US negotiator Christopher Hill was last month, especially if General

Cook planned to do his "time is running out" act.

There were other hints of things to come in Mr Rubin's cheery meeting with the press yesterday afternoon. After Washington, the Kosovo Al-

bans would have to head home for "necessary consultation" so that the implementation will stick, he told us. "It is very important for the Kosovo delegation to stay unified." It was also very important, he added, that

the Kosovars should "stay in touch with the United States". Nobody asked why this "necessary consultation" should be necessary. Was the Kosovo delegation not so unified as we have been led to believe? Could

it be that there will be an unconscionable delay between the delegations' signature "for peace" and the arrival of Nato troops, a delay so long that the Kosovars will suffer hundreds more martyrs at Serb hands?

Nato has told us all again and again that if the Kosovo Albanians sign up to the autonomy agreement and the Serbs do not, then Serbia will be bombed. But it is not being bombed.

No wonder the men of Kosovo were praised for their "courageous decision to choose peace", that the Serbs were blamed by Mr Rubin for their "intransigence". Other words for their behaviour might have been chosen by the refugees fleeing the latest Serb offensive. No wonder that much was made of how Hashem Thaci personally thanked Supreme Commander Albright for her work in bringing about the agreement. She was sorry she couldn't be there, we were told.

We saw the Kosovo delegation leaving later, Mr Rugova - philosopher, intellectual, long discarded as the spearhead of independence - giving us all a royal wave from his bus. Then came the signing ceremony. "It will be clear for all the world to see that the Kosovo Albanians have chosen the path for peace," the American spokesman told us. But journalists were not even allowed to sit in the same room as the delegates. Instead, we were invited into the French foreign ministry's conference centre to view this supposedly historic achievement on a video screen. Through a glass dardly.

of him with prostitutes has been broken

Russians elish sex nd video skandal'

Burma jibe over Suu Kyi's ailing husband

BURMA'S MILITARY government said yesterday that it was reviewing a visa request from the dying British husband of the opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, but said the request was "surprising", and that it would be more sensible for her to visit him.

"The government [of Burma] suggests that Ms Suu Kyi, who is in perfect health, travel to England to respond to her husband's dying wish to see her. She has so far refused to go," it said in the capital, Rangoon.

The military has long sought a way to get Ms Suu Kyi, the biggest thorn in its side for a decade, out of the country. She has not left for the past 11 years, fearing she would not be allowed back if she did.

Sources close to the family say that her husband, Michael Aris, an Oxford academic who has been denied a visa to Burma for the past three years,



Aung San Suu Kyi: Fears exile if she leaves Burma

is dying from prostate cancer which has spread to his spine and lungs.

The government said in a statement that it would provide Ms Suu Kyi "all possible assistance" to join her husband. It did not say if she would be allowed to return if she did so. The authorities argued that a

trip by Mr Aris to Burma "would appear to be both irresponsible and inhumane, and the government is reluctant to encourage or endorse such an action".

The sources close to Ms Suu Kyi's family said that even if Mr Aris were granted a visa, he was not fit enough to travel. But he would do so if his condition improved, despite fears that he might not survive the journey.

Tin Oo, vice-chairman of Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, said that the opposition leader was very worried about her husband but could not leave Burma. "She knows that if she does, the military regime will never allow her to return," he said.

Suu Kyi, who won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her courage in standing up to military rule, has not left Burma since she returned to Rangoon in early 1988 to nurse her dying mother. (Reuters)

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New purge of EU officials on the way

THE EUROPEAN Commission looks set to be convulsed by a further wave of revelations on corruption and mismanagement and a ruthless purge of the top ranks of its officials.

The five-person inquiry team whose damning report helped topple the commissioners on Monday night, is now preparing for the second phase of the probe. Yesterday some members of the committee accused the Commission of "hindering" its work.

The target of the next phase is the Commission's 24 directorates-general whose 16,000 staff carry out the day-to-day management of tasks and the execution of policies including the awarding of financial contracts.

There were suggestions in the German press yesterday of a rearguard attempt by the Commission hierarchy to gag the inquiry by refusing to co-operate with the next round. But any refusal to hand over documents would trigger all-out war with the European Parliament when the heads of government like Tony Blair have demanded "root and branch" reform.

The inquiry team is reported to have already received hundreds of boxes of additional information which will form part of the second phase.

The prospect of a purge of senior ranking permanent officials is now being relished by handpicked aides and political advisers in the Commissioners' "cabinets" or private offices, who themselves were indirectly the target of much of the criticism in the first phase report.

"There is no point in clearing away the commissioners who accept political responsibility if you leave in place the faceless civil servants who were actually lining their pockets and mismanaging things," said one cabinet member yesterday.

BY KATHERINE BUTLER
in Brussels

Many middle and junior ranking civil servants are also anxious to see a clear out. "The wise persons report is only the tip of the iceberg," said one. Others said they were appalled by the report and expressed solidarity with Paul Van Buitenen the sacked Commission whistleblower. Mr Van Buitenen was given a standing ovation when he showed up at a general assembly of EU staff unions on Wednesday.



Cresson: Suggests the report was exaggerated

Among the targets of the new broom would, according to some sources, be powerful behind the scenes figures. "Why should these top civil servants get off scot free?" said an insider.

The presidents of political groups in the European Parliament meet on Monday night in Brussels to decide the remit for the second stage of the inquiry and parliament officials say there will be agreement that it should proceed. "There is definitely a feeling that we need to go down to the next rung of the ladder".

The inquiry team yesterday hit back at commissioners who suggested that parts of the explosive report were deliberately

hyped up. Edith Cresson, the disgraced French commissioner, on Wednesday suggested that the conclusions of the report did not tally with the body of the text and had been sharpened up for political effect on Sunday night after she had seen them. Pierre Lelong, president of the French court of auditors, one of the inquiry team flatly denied the accusation. "The conclusions were not hardened up. The few changes we made were done with the most scrupulous attention to the truth and without pressure from anyone anywhere," he said.

Walter Van Gerven, a judge formerly on the bench of the European Court of Justice, was another of the five wise persons. He said: "The European Parliament gave us our mandate and I think they are quite bappy with the work we did". He added that the most serious problem shown up by the inquiry was that the Commission had taken on too much work. "The Commission is not made to directly manage hundreds of contracts with tourism promotion associations for example."

"Likewise to launch a policy of aid to abandoned children in Romania and then to entrust the job to a private company and let it choose the beneficiaries of public money, that is madness."

Andre Middelhoeke, a former member of the EU court of auditors, slated the culture of commissioners failing to look beyond their own noses. "Commissioners should look beyond the hedges of their garden and tear out the weeds from the gardens of their neighbours."

The inquiry team was appointed in January after the Commission agreed to co-operate with a probe in a bid to stave off a vote of censure in parliament.

Donald Macintyre,
Review, page 3



Sir Leon Brittan, 'caretaker' Commission vice-president, fields questions yesterday on whether he will run for president

Reuters

Rift opens on stopgap president

A NEW rift has opened up among Europe's leaders on whether to appoint an interim successor to Jacques Santer, as signs of a quick agreement on who should fill the job of European Commission president faded yesterday.

Although several countries - including Britain and Germany - have called for the speedy appointment of a full-time replacement, many believe there is a growing likelihood of an interim Commission headed by a caretaker such as Sir Leon Brittan, the British vice-president of the Commission, or the Belgian commissioner, Karel Van Miert.

One complication is that the new president needs to be approved by the European Parliament. Because elections are

BY STEPHEN CASTLE
in Brussels

due in June, a permanent president would require the support of both the old and the new parliaments, requiring two processes in nine months.

Several countries, including France, now expect an interim solution and Spain wants to keep the existing Commission in place at least until the European elections.

Two serving premiers who have not yet let their names go forward for the top job of president, Wim Kok of the Netherlands and Antonio Guterres of Portugal, are likely to come into the frame, if either think they could get unanimous support of the 15 leaders. If a decision

could be delayed until later in the year that would help Mr Guterres because he would not want to leave before Portuguese elections, which are due in the autumn.

Romano Prodi, the former Italian premier, has won early status as favourite but one European diplomat said yesterday: "He is a little obvious, and the obvious candidate usually does not get it." Although he has the backing of the Italian government, he could suffer from not being a member of the socialist group to which 11 of the 15 heads of government belong.

Tony Blair has publicly praised Mr Prodi, with whom he attended a seminar in Washington last year on the Third Way, but this could be tactical.

Mr Kok and Mr Guterres might also win British support when the real horse-trading gets under way.

Javier Solana, Nato's Secretary-General, is a socialist but does not have the support as yet of the Spanish premier, Jose Maria Aznar, who comes from a rival party - Mr Aznar would prefer Mr Guterres with whom he has close relations. Mr Solana could become available after the Nato summit next month. Felipe Gonzalez, the former Spanish prime minister, is unlikely to get Mr Aznar's backing.

Rudolf Scharping, the German Defence Minister, could emerge if Bonn decides to put forward a candidate. And there is even speculation that Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Prime Min-

ister of Belgium whose candidature for the job was blocked in 1994 by the then British prime minister John Major, could re-emerge as a contender.

Germany yesterday ruled out the possibility of deciding on a new president at next week's summit in Berlin. Instead, leaders want negotiations over the Agenda 2000 financial reforms of the EU to have priority.

A further complication revolves around treaty changes. Under the existing Maastricht treaty, the parliament can reject the president, if it chooses, and examine appointments of Commissioners. But after 1 May, the Amsterdam treaty comes into force, strengthening the powers of the assembly which will be elected in June.

Bonn opposition rounds on Schroder's handling of crisis

THE GERMAN government was accused yesterday of botching its duties in Europe and of pushing next week's European Union summit in Berlin to the brink of failure.

Such criticism has been levelled before by Germany's opponents in Europe, but this time it was voiced by Gerhard Schröder's opposition, which traditionally stands shoulder to shoulder with the Bonn government on important European matters.

"From every capital in Europe we have been hearing all week that the German Presidency has worked extremely poorly and had been extremely badly prepared," said Wolfgang Schäuble, leader of the Christian Democrats. "You are hurting Europe when you do such bad work."

The attack came during the first Bundestag debate on the EU since the mass resignations in Brussels, and appeared to

BY IMRE KARACS
in Berlin

take Joschka Fischer, the Foreign Minister, by surprise. With Helmut Kohl, the undisputed champion of EU integration, sitting silently in the back benches, Mr Fischer appealed for bipartisan support, but got none.

Mr Kohl's successors feel the administration has its priorities wrong. Left with the task of sorting out the mess in Brussels, the government continues to insist that Europe's leaders must reach an agreement on reform before addressing the question of who should be the new Commission President.

"If the EU doesn't do its homework in the current situation, it would appear incapable of acting and politically split, and this would lead to a regression into national selfishness," Mr Fischer told parliament.



Gerhard Schröder: Accused of lacking finesse

"A failure in Berlin would endanger the timetable of expansion," he warned, referring to the queue of applicants waiting for the EU to sort out its budget and institutional reforms before they can join. But Bonn has been criticised both abroad and at home for pushing its own budget rebate too hard.

Though the claim for a reduction was first made by the Kohl government, the Christian

Democrats who now find themselves in opposition say Mr Schröder lacks his predecessor's finesse, and is therefore endangering a deal.

For the first time, Mr Fischer hinted yesterday that Germany was prepared to lower its sights in its growing desperation to reach a deal. Acknowledging that Germany would remain the largest EU contributor, the Foreign Minister appeared to settle for a token reduction.

"What is decisive is to achieve a fairer distribution of the burden," he said. That would mean Britain paying a little more and Germany paying a little less. Now only the final figures need to be haggled over. "A compromise is in sight," Mr Fischer said.

Germany appears ready to loosen its grip on the agenda in Berlin, allowing time for a discussion on who should succeed Jacques Santer.

Dump commissioners, says Hague

WILLIAM HAGUE will today demand that all 20 members of the European Commission should lose their jobs permanently after the scathing inquiry revealing fraud and mismanagement in Brussels.

The Tory leader will raise the stakes in his battle with Tony Blair over the EU crisis by saying none of the existing commissioners should be reappointed after a new commission president has been found to succeed Jacques Santer.

Although all 20 commission

BY ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

members resigned after Monday's inquiry report, a majority of them are expected to be reinstated. Mr Blair has called for Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock, Britain's commissioners, to get their jobs back.

At the Welsh Conservatives' conference in Cardiff, Mr Hague will say: "We need a total clear-out of the existing European commissioners."

Mr Hague said it was "totally

outrageous and indefensible" that commissioners resigning in disgrace could receive severance packages worth up to £300,000. He said Mr Blair must not back down after calling for the payments to be blocked.

Downing Street conceded yesterday that it was not aware of the provisions in the commissioners' contracts, but stuck to Mr Blair's demand. "A lot of people would find it staggering that these kinds of pay-offs are being handed about, given the circumstances in which they

will leave," said his spokesman.

Mr Hague said Parliament should be allowed to approve the Prime Minister's choice of Britain's representatives in Brussels. But the Tory leader faced accusations of "double standards" from his own MPs at a private meeting on Wednesday for not consulting them before he proposed that Sir Alastair Goodlad, the party's former chief whip, succeed Sir Leon in January. Some MPs wanted Mr Hague to nominate Chris Patten, the former Tory chairman.

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Match 6 (Jackpot)	0	-	-
Match 5 plus bonus ball	5	£271,413	£1,357,065
Match 5	370	£2,292	£848,040
Match 4	21,239	£57	£1,217,793
Match 3	438,850	£10	£4,388,500
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Maybe, just maybe. THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data compiled in Camelot's central computer system shall prevail.

Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2636 Fax: 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS

BICC rebuffs £379m
Wassall takeover bid

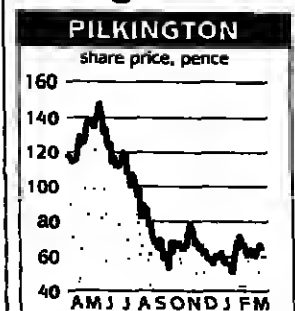
BRIEFING

Deutsche ups cash call to DM6bn

DEUTSCHE BANK said yesterday that it was increasing the size of the rights issue to fund its \$10bn (£6.25bn) purchase of Bankers Trust by 50 per cent to DM6bn (£2.07bn). The German giant said the extra cash would help equip it for "continuing consolidation" in Europe's banking industry.

Chairman Rolf Breuer dampened speculation that the bigger call meant Deutsche would step into the bank bid war in France. There has been talk that Deutsche could partially underwrite BNP's bid for Société Générale. The bank's shares fell 1.23 euros to 50.65 on the cash call news. Net income, including the DM3.2bn windfall dividend from the bank's Daimler-Benz shareholding, tripled to DM3.4bn.

Pilkington restructuring on target



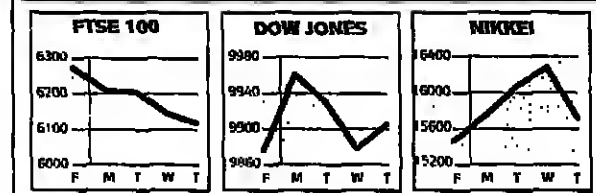
PAOLO SCARONI, chief executive of Pilkington, said yesterday the benefits were coming through from the restructuring of the glass maker's European operations, with margins almost double last year's and prices firm. Demand for float glass in Europe, Pilkington's largest single business area, is running at similar levels to last year, while plant disposals and

closures in Britain and Germany are mostly completed. Mr Scaroni confirmed the group would take a £30m charge in the full year for exchange rate related losses in Poland, Mexico and Brazil.

Goldsmiths bids £44m to go private

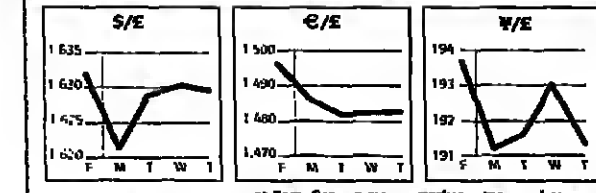
GOLDSMITHS, the jewellery chain, yesterday became the latest company to give up on the stock market when its management launched a £44m bid to take the group private. The management team, led by chief executive Jurek Piasecki and backed by the Alchemy venture capital group, is offering 183p per share. This is a 9 per cent premium over the previous day's closing price but a 63 per cent premium over the price just before Christmas when the management made its first approach.

STOCK MARKETS



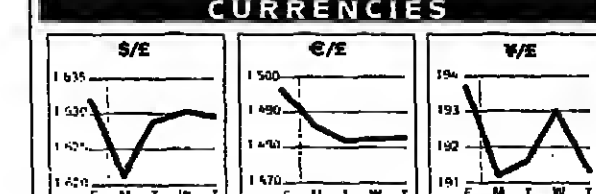
Index	Close	Change	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6114.30	+28.30	6369.40	4599.20	2.67
FTSE 250	5463.30	+23.00	5970.90	4247.60	3.12
FTSE 350	2917.50	+12.40	3024.90	2210.40	2.74
FTSE All Share	2625.40	+11.50	2923.83	2143.53	2.78
FTSE SmallCap	2373.80	+1.10	2793.80	1834.40	3.45
FTSE Fledgling	1293.70	+0.90	1517.10	1046.20	4.17
FTSE AIM	847.10	+2.30	1146.90	761.30	1.11
FTSE Europe 100	2677.77	+11.15	3079.27	2018.15	2.95
FTSE Europe 300	1242.43	+3.42	1332.07	880.63	1.96
Dow Jones	9905.77	+24.69	10001.78	7400.30	1.60
Nikkei	15717.92	+550.19	17111.59	12787.90	0.90
Hang Seng	10659.32	+280.73	11926.16	6544.79	3.35
Dax	5013.62	+63.81	6217.89	3833.71	1.73
S&P 500	1306.33	+7.45	1311.11	923.32	1.23
Nasdaq	2440.97	+11.77	2833.44	1351.09	0.28
Telcel	6099.80	+6.38	6110	5320.30	1.81
Brazil Bovespa	10638.68	+3.92	12339.14	4575.69	5.89
Belgium BEL20	3315.17	+27.35	3713.21	2896.26	2.12
Amsterdam Eux	537.59	+2.38	600.65	366.58	1.91
France CAC 40	4152.87	+17.64	4404.94	2881.21	1.74
Italian MIB30	3700.00	+31.00	3917.00	2475.00	1.10
Madrid IBS35	10039.70	+72.40	10999.80	8869.50	1.74
Irish Overall	5296.87	+0.73	5581.70	3732.57	1.57
S Korea KOSPI	578.98	+21.54	651.95	277.37	0.38
Australia ASX	2987.70	+10.10	2996.30	2386.70	3.11

INTEREST RATES



Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.39	-2.17	5.33	-2.26	4.43
US	5.00	-0.89	5.28	-0.50	5.10
Japan	0.18	-0.52	0.22	-0.44	1.80
Germany	3.03	-0.48	3.02	-0.72	3.91

CURRENCIES



Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.39	-2.17	5.33	-2.26	4.43
US	5.00	-0.89	5.28	-0.50	5.10
Japan	0.18	-0.52	0.22	-0.44	1.80
Germany	3.03	-0.48	3.02	-0.72	3.91

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.39	-2.17	5.33	-2.26	4.43
US	5.00	-0.89	5.28	-0.50	5.10
Japan	0.18	-0.52	0.22	-0.44	1.80
Germany	3.03	-0.48	3.02	-0.72	3.91

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.4984
Austria (schillings)	19.68
Belgium (francs)	57.85
Canada (\$)	2.4147
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8272
Denmark (krone)	10.72
Finland (markka)	8.5486
France (francs)	9.3933
Germany (marks)	2.8080
Greece (drachma)	461.27
Hong Kong (\$)	12.24
India (rupees)	1.1249
Indonesia (rupiah)	62.12
Israel (shekels)	6.0579
Italy (lira)	2.786
Japan (yen)	189.53
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.8647
Norway (krona)	0.6162

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

BICC HAS turned down a takeover approach from Wassall, the aggressive venture capitalist, which valued the beleaguered construction-to-cables group at £379m.

Wassall last night revealed that it had made the tentative offer, which was pitched at 90p cash for each BICC ordinary share, to BICC's board last Friday. However, BICC rebuffed the approach earlier this week, prompting Wassall to make its tentative approach public.

Chris Miller, Wassall's chief executive, said: "We believe that this proposal should be brought to the attention of BICC shareholders and continue to seek a constructive dialogue with the board of BICC."

statement to the Stock Exchange explaining why it rejected the offer.

The stock market will this morning have its first opportunity to respond to the news, which was announced after the close of trading yesterday. BICC shares closed down 1.5p at 82p yesterday, while Wassall shares were up 2.5p at 208.5p.

Apart from its cash offer for BICC ordinary shares, Wassall is also proposing to offer £1.10 worth of 10.75 per cent loan stock for each of BICC's 200m convertible preference shares.

Wassall's move follows months of speculation that it was preparing a bid for BICC. The company, which turned it

self from a mini-conglomerate into a venture capital-style vehicle last year, has been building a shareholding in BICC since last autumn. It currently owns more than 9 per cent of BICC.

The bid also comes just six months after Wassall took control of TLG, the lighting group, in a £53m deal after outbidding Cooper Industries, the US diversified electricals group.

Shares in BICC have more than halved in price in the past year, mainly due to sharp price falls and sliding demand for its cables businesses as a result of the Asian crisis and worldwide economic slowdown.

Last week, the group reported a pre-tax loss of £94m for

the year to December 1998, compared to a loss of £30m in 1997. Before exceptional profits fell from £10m to £7m.

BICC shareholders have frequently pressured the company to separate its Balfour Beatty construction arm from its cables operations. However, Alan Jones, the chief executive, has constantly rejected this.

Wassall last night insisted that it intended to bid for the whole of BICC. It also stressed it wanted to bid on its own.

However, analysts said that if it succeeded Wassall would be likely to find another buyer for Balfour Beatty, allowing it to concentrate on improving the cables business.

Retail sales dip adds to rate cut pressure

BY DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

RETAILERS HAD aghast February, according to official figures yesterday. Along with weak lending figures, the news convinced many analysts that another interest rate cut is likely.

The volume of sales on the high street dipped by 0.3 per cent last month. There was a 1.3 per cent rise in the year to February, but the Office for National Statistics said the underlying rate of sales growth had slowed.

"There is enough here to convince the Bank of England the economy needs a bit more of a lift," said Claudiu Burtan, an economist at Deutsche Bank.

Willem Buiter, the member of the Monetary Policy Committee to vote for an interest rate cut earlier this month, said yesterday he favoured moving quickly to a level at which rates would not have to be cut again. However, he added that confidence indicators had improved since January. "There has been a quick turnaround," he said.

Most analysts see the level of borrowing costs falling from the current 5.5 per cent to a trough of 5 per cent or even 4 per cent.

Yesterday's statistics showed declines in all categories of sales volumes in February. Year-on-year terms, sales of household goods remain the strongest, up

THE US trade deficit soared to a record \$16.99bn in January as exports of US goods fell and imports of steel and manufactured goods soared.

The bilateral deficit with China showed a particularly big rise, up from \$3.98bn in December to \$4.86bn in February. Steel imports from China jumped by 6 per cent.

The deficit with Japan narrowed from \$3.88bn to \$4.66bn, but the overall trade gap was about \$1bn wider than analysts had expected.

The yawning gap between imports and exports is likely to slow US economic growth significantly during the year. Figures on consumer prices showed them rising by just 0.1 per cent in February, taking the annual inflation rate to 1.6 per cent. The benign inflation outlook means the Federal Reserve is expected to leave US interest rates unchanged.

7 per cent thanks to the steady housing market. Department stores are facing poorly, with sales down 2.2 per cent in the year to February. However, the retail sales figures have been erratic. The timing of sales around Christmas and New Year makes them difficult to interpret.

Separately the Bank of England reported a slowdown in the growth of broad money, M4. Its growth rate declined to 7.5 per cent last month.

Both the British Bankers' Association and Building Societies Association reported weak lending in February. Underlying growth in home loans remained buoyant, but Abbey National's securitisation of £2m of mortgages depressed the figure.

Adrian Coles, BBA director general, said a big increase in the number of loans approved signalled the possibility of a spring pick-up in the housing market. Approvals climbed to 1,950 in February, the highest level since September. Other new lending to individuals slowed to £478m in February, well below the recent monthly average.

National Express takes on US school buses

BY PHILIP THORNTON
Transport Correspondent

NATIONAL EXPRESS, the public transport group, is planning an attack on the \$8bn American school bus market as part of a strategy to create an international business.

The group said it was in a strong position and could spend up to £250m "tomorrow" because of its low gearing. It said up to 40 per cent of sales could come from overseas within two years.

Colin Child, the National Express deputy chief executive, said the US school bus network - the country's largest transport system - was ripe for consolidation and privatisation. He said two-thirds of the system was still run by public sector school boards.

"The other third in the private sector is fragmented and run by 5,000 'mom and pop' organisations," he said.

Last September National Express bought two operators



Phil White, National Express chief executive, and Colin Child (behind), deputy chief executive Magali Delporte

with 1,750 buses, making it the US's fifth largest operator. Mr Child said National Express had been attracted to the US, and to Australia where it is bidding for rail franchises, because of the common language and similar legal and accountancy standards.

Within two years, up to 40 per cent of turnover would come from overseas, including 30 per

cent from the US from the current zero position.

The expansion plans were revealed as the group, with interests in trains, airports, buses and coaches, announced a 77 per cent surge in annual profits for 1998 to £97m from £54.8m.

Operating profits before exceptional costs rose 14.4 per cent to £95.6m (£83.6m). The

total dividend was 16p per share, up from 13.5p.

Much of the progress was attributed to the inclusion of a full year performance for three train operating companies acquired in 1997 - Central Trains, ScotRail and Silverlink.

Together with the Gatwick Express and Midland Main Line, the division saw turnover steam ahead to £918m and prof-

its rise 31.5 per cent to £25.9m.

Passenger growth ranged from 5 to 15 per cent on different routes, with passenger numbers up 7.5 per cent to 137 million.

Mr White said National Express planned to ask the Government to extend its franchise terms for Central, ScotRail and Silverlink beyond their current seven years.

Rover crashes £650m into red

HUGE RESTRUCTURING costs sent the Rover car company deep into the red last year, according to figures yesterday.

Rover made a loss of around DM1.87bn (£850m) compared with a loss of £91m in 1997. Its German owner BMW disappointed analysts with a 27 per cent fall in net profits to DM903m.

BMW said the sharp rise in losses at Rover was a result of "model changes, market and currency factors and the restructuring measures".

The figures came as BMW executives examined details of the Government's offer of grants aimed at securing the future of Rover's Longbridge plant, which employs 12,000 people.

BMW is debating where to build the production site for the successor to the Rover 200 and 400 series mid-range car. It has submitted grant applications to

BY PHILIP THORNTON

both the UK and Hungarian governments.

Stephen Byers, Trade and Industry Secretary, confirmed that he had finalised a "complex" package in time for BMW's board meeting yesterday. The subsidy package is believed to amount to £180m. He expects further talks with BMW in the next few weeks.

Tony Woodley, chief car industry negotiator for the Transport and General Workers trade union, said he was confident that BMW would choose Britain.

"Fifty to sixty thousand jobs depend on this decision, and of course the company understands that and the British government understands that," he said.

Industry sources said they did not expect an announcement until the middle of next week.

GKN links with Agusta to form helicopter giant

GKN, the industrial group, yesterday announced details of a deal to combine its Westland division with Agusta of Italy to create a new European helicopters group.

Westland is to link up with Agusta, a division of the Italian industrial group Finmeccanica, in a 50-50 joint venture. David Wright, an executive director of GKN, will become the chairman.

The deal is likely to delight Michael Heseltine, who first tried to combine Westland with a European group when he was defence secretary in the mid-1980s. Mr Heseltine resigned after the plan was blocked by the then prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who favoured a US rescue.

GKN yesterday stressed that far from being a rescue, Westland and Agusta would form the second largest helicopter manufacturer in the world.

BY ANDREW VERITY

"Together they will form one of the world's premier helicopter companies with a broad range of civil and defence products, a strong order book and an exciting programme of new products and technologies," it said in a statement with Finmeccanica.

The deal marks another step forward in the consolidation of the defence and aerospace industries, leaving Europe with just two helicopter manufacturers - Westland/Agusta and Eurocopter, a consortium led by the French group Aerospatiale.

Mr Wright said further European deals could be in the offing. He declined to rule out a tie-up with Eurocopter - a move that would put Boeing, the world's biggest helicopter maker, on the back foot.

Executives have taken nearly a year to thrash out details of

the deal after announcing the plan in April last year. Yesterday they named Amedeo Caporaletti, president of Agusta, as chief executive of Westland, will be managing director.

More than 4,800 staff will be transferred to the new company, which already has an order book of £2.3bn. A surge in new orders led the group to recruit 500 staff in the last year.

The companies have already worked together to develop the EH101, a three-engine, 15-tonne helicopter used by the Royal Navy. A total of 98 EH101s have been ordered by the Royal Air Force, the Italian Navy, the Canadian Armed Forces and a customer in Japan.

Analysts welcomed the deal but said more consolidation was needed. "There are still too many [helicopter groups] across the world," said one.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

LONDON BLUE-CHIP shares yesterday closed lower for the fifth consecutive session, hit by profit-taking and worries over the expiry of option contracts.

The FTSE 100 index fell 26.3 to 6,114.3, with many buyers remaining on the sidelines ahead of today's expiry of the March options series, one of the stock market's traditional bugbears. The smaller indices also came under selling pressure, with the FTSE 250 falling 23 to 5,463.3 and the FTSE 350 ending 1.1 lower at 2,917.5.

Market Report, page 21

NEW YORK

STOCKS CLUNG to thin gains in late morning trading, with transport and banks highlighting otherwise lacklustre trade.

Analysts kept the 10,000 Dow threshold in mind, even though the market held below 9,800 for most of the morning. Any signs of a rally were stifled by bouts of profit taking ahead of today's derivative expiries.

As European bourses closed, the Dow average was up 17.5 points at 9,896.9. The Nasdaq was up 7.9 at 2,446, and the S&P 500 was up 5.6 points at 1,303.

TOKYO

THE NIKKEI 225 index closed more than 3 per cent down at 15,717.9 amid concern that the benchmark index's recent rise had been excessive.

Traders said Sony and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi bore the brunt of the profit taking, which intensified towards the close. The heavyweights both fell over 4 per cent.

Buying by foreign investors was the driving force behind the recent rally in the Nikkei average, spurred by hopes Japanese companies are taking long-awaited restructuring steps to steer themselves and the economy back to recovery.

PARIS

THE CAC 40 closed down 0.42 per cent at 4,152, after earlier falling as low as 4,093. France Telecom weighed on the blue chip index, falling sharply after announcing flat profits for 1998, despite predictions that deregulation across Europe's telecom markets would boost profits this year.

LVMI rose 4.85 per cent after the luxury brands group said with its 1998 results that the worst of the Asian crisis was behind it, while Renault climbed 1.9 per cent as worries over its planned tie-up with Nissan receded.

FRANKFURT

THE BLUE-CHIP Xetra box closed down 0.73 per cent at 5,058.8, just above the psychologically important 5,000 point level, amid light trade and uncertainty ahead of option expiries today.

Deutsche Bank led the decliners, falling over 3 per cent after it announced a larger than expected capital increase to fund its Bankers' Trust acquisition, while Dresdner Bank fell 1.8 per cent on profit taking after its recent rise on the back of its French partner BNP's bid for SocGen and Paribas.

هكذا من الأصل

Time for Europe to celebrate spending

HOW DO you persuade people to spend more money? This might seem a novel problem, for here in Britain there has never been much difficulty in stoking up a consumer boom: all you have to do is cut interest rates.

We also build the temples to consumerism, the physical entities designed to encourage people to part with their cash – as the Bluewater complex, the largest shopping centre in Europe – shows. And we have, by European though not by US standards, long shopping hours.

But in Euroland this happy state of affairs does not invariably exist. Some countries are booming. The Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland are all growing fast, helped by solid growth in consumption. But elsewhere, particularly in Germany and Italy, growth is slow. Indeed overall, continental European consumption remains pretty stagnant, giving rise to the worrying thought that core Europe might catch the Japanese disease, where interest rate cuts and fiscal packages fail to stimulate any growth at all.

Both Germany and Italy are quite close to slipping back into recession, with negative growth in the last quarter of the year. Neither can rely on exports to pull the economy up this spring. Investment is pretty flat and government spending is constrained by the Maastricht rules. So the only source of demand has to be the consumer. That is obvious enough. What is less obvious is what is actually happening to consumption, for European consumers are saying that they are confident but they are not buying much more. The divergence between reported consumer confidence and reported business confidence is striking (see graph). Taking the euro-11 as a whole, ordinary people have seldom been more cheerful about their economic prospects. By contrast, the business community is plunging back into gloom. For most of the last two decades the two have moved together, so this divergence is puzzling. What is the explanation? Does it matter? And if so what is to be done?

The explanation comes in several parts. First, the confidence levels of European business have been depressed by lack of confidence in the governments in Germany, France and Italy. The most notorious anti-business minister, "Red Oskar", has been heaved out, which is a start, but immense damage has been done to the German business community's belief in its politicians.

As anyone who has had even a brief conversation with a German business leader in recent months will have found, within about three minutes the fury would begin to erupt. They thought they were the heroes of the German prosperity (which, of course, they were) and ac-



HAMISH MCRAE

With consumption stagnant, core Europe could catch the Japanese disease

cordingly they would be listened to (which they weren't).

Similar, though more muted concerns infect some French industrialists, and while it is hard to make any sensible generalisations, it is probably also true that medium-sized businesses in Italy, the ones that matter, retain their traditional scepticism towards the government of the day.

But it is not just politics. European business also knows it faces a new and more competitive world with the transparency of pricing with the euro. The wave of reconstructions, mergers and other deals is a first stage in the response to it. But while it is early enough to feel the fears, it is too early to perceive the benefits. In as far as the introduction of the euro does anything to business confidence, I suspect that, so far at least, it has reduced it.

Finally, euroland business confidence will have been depressed by the fall off in demand from what has until recently been its best export market – the UK. Rapid growth, an open attitude towards imported goods, strong sterling and a high propensity to import has made the UK a very attractive market for continental Europe. Now that growth here is easing, that market has weakened, though this has yet to show up in the import numbers.

If it is easy to explain European commercial gloom it is much harder to explain European consumer cheer, particularly because it does not seem to be translated into spending.

The usual explanation when figures don't add up is that they are wrong, but I can't quite see how they could be wrong in this instance. Euroland has a population of 290 million so any survey of consumer opinion is going to be a very broad-brush effort. But if these people say they are confident I see no reason to try and question that. The puzzle is more that if they are indeed confident, why are they not spending more?

I have two possible explanations to offer. The first – not very good one – is that the consumer spending figures have

become unreliable, perhaps that additional spending is now going on in the cash economy rather than in the taxed one.

So people are more confident, but their reaction to the higher taxation needed to meet the Maastricht targets has encouraged them to spend their money in ways which minimises the tax-take.

The second is that the shift to a near-zero inflation world has changed buying patterns, delaying purchases. So consumers feel more confident, but they also see no need to rush out and buy now. Things may be cheaper next year.

What is to be done depends on what is wrong. But we may not be able to risk waiting for explanations if demand continues to remain flat. The range of policy options is really quite limited.

Governments can't ease fiscal policy without busting the Maastricht rules – indeed they used a lot of creative accounting to get within them. Monetary policy is outside their control, and in any case may be much less effective than it used

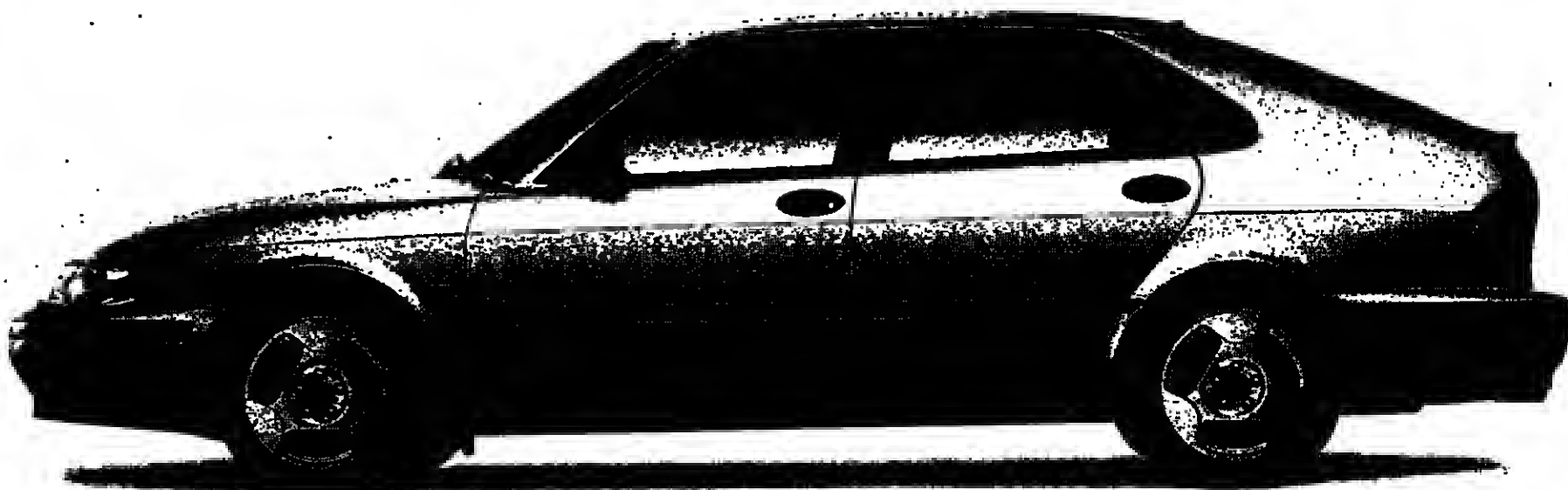
to be. When interest rates are down in the 3 per cent region, you may not achieve much but cutting the odd half percentage point off rates. When they were in double digits then a sharp cut in rates was at least noticed. In any case a cut in short-term rates might have the opposite effect to that intended if long-term rates rose as a result.

No, the only available policy is structural reform. In that sense Euroland is in pretty much the same position as Japan – fiscal and monetary policies are unavailable or ineffective, so you have only one further thing you can do. But structural policies – removing labour market rigidities, easing business regulation, changing planning controls and so on – carry costs too. Consumption in Euroland will not remain flat for ever, but developing a culture which celebrates spending (as America does and Britain seems to be trying to do) takes a long time. The great European consumption boom may not come in time to rescue the world economy when the US economy eventually slackens.

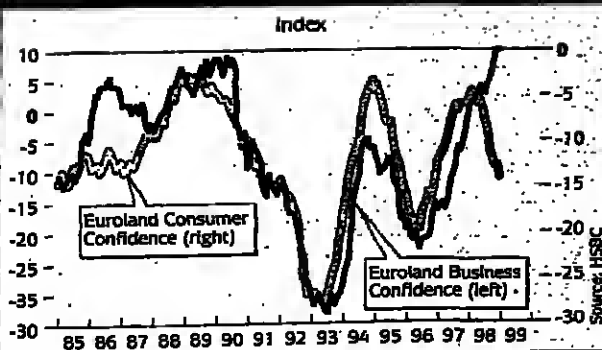


The Bluewater complex, near Dartford, is the largest shopping centre in Europe

David Rose



EUROLAND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE



IN BRIEF

William Morrison launches price campaign as profits rise 15.5%

WILLIAM MORRISON SUPERMARKETS, the Bradford-based food retailer, yesterday launched a new price campaign as it reported a strong set of full-year results. Morrison has launched "Price Mission Plus" promising more than £100m of cost savings through a range of special offers. The group's low price policy has paid off with profits up by 15.5 per cent to £174.8m. Same store sales rose by 7.5 per cent on the previous year if petrol sales are included. Analysts were impressed and the shares rose 18.5p to 238.5p.

Unigate renews Terranova attack

UNIGATE, the food and dairy group that has launched a £228.5m hostile bid for Terranova Foods, made a further attack on its target saying the company faces "an uncertain future" as a small independent company. It said that shares in an independent Terranova could return to pre-bid speculation levels (75p). Terranova shares closed unchanged at 137p against Unigate's 125p per share offer. Terranova has rejected the bid as "opportunistic and inadequate".

Merger activity boosts Axa

AXA, the French insurance giant buying Guardian Royal Exchange for £3.4bn, yesterday said it had made £12bn (£360m) in four days because of merger activity in the French banking sector. Claude Bébér, the chairman, also confirmed he had given his prior approval of the hostile bid by Banque Nationale de Paris for its rivals Société Générale and Paribas, increasing the value of Axa's shareholdings. Mr Bébér added that it was inevitable that the Sun Life and Guardian Royal Exchange would eventually be renamed Axa. The group recorded net income up 27 per cent to 1.53bn euros (£1.1bn). Earnings per share rose 21.5 per cent.

SAAB CONTRACT HIRE.

Typical Example: Saab 9-3 2.0i 5 door
For VAT Registered Business Users only

Period of hire	48 months
Deposit	£3,000 plus VAT
Monthly payment	47 x £199 plus VAT
On the road cash price	£17,145
Contract based on 48 months/60,000 miles without maintenance	

PRICES CORRECT AT PRESS DATE. EXCESS MILEAGE CHARGE IS 5.44 PENCE (PLUS VAT) PER MILE. DEPOSIT INCLUDES ACCEPTANCE FEE OF £75 (PLUS VAT). FULL WRITTEN QUOTATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST. INDEMNITIES MAY BE REQUIRED IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. CAR SHOWN FITTED WITH OPTIONAL ALLOY WHEELS.

SAAB 9-3 2.0i 5 door. Total charge for credit: £20,435.95 (includes a finance facility fee of £70, payable with the first monthly payment). Total charge for cash: £17,145.00. APR 8.49%. Further charges may be made. Mileage condition if the vehicle is returned at the end of the finance agreement. Written quotations only.

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First Choice up on Airtours talk

IS AIRTOURS planning to disrupt the marriage between First Choice and its Swiss partner Knuoni? The market was awash with rumours that the UK's second-largest tour operator was about to turn the no-premium merger between its two rivals into a three-way scramble for the best seats in the European holiday market.

The smart money was on a 200-a-share hostile bid for First Choice, owner of Unifit and Hays & Jarvis. The offer would value the UK travel group at a sunny £742m, leaving Knuoni, the push holiday specialist, out in the cold.

Airtours offered the customary "no comment" but the prospect of a juicy premium prompted traders to check in with First Choice in the hope of booking future gains. Some suggested that the battle of the tour operators could become even hotter, with the German group, Proussing also willing to put its towel on First Choice.

First Choice stock travelled almost 11 per cent higher to close at 178.5p, close to its five-year peak. Volume was

SANDWICH BANK & Crust Company is on its way back to Oxfes after a six-month absence. Shares in the maker of own-brand sandwiches were suspended at 12.5p in September to carry out a refinancing. Yesterday the company asked for one more month to put its house in order. It said it was close to appointing a chief executive and that the refinancing was "well under way". The stock should resume trading in mid-April.

also sky-high with over 3.6 million shares traded. Airtours nosedived 6p to 490p as investors fretted at the costs of the bid.

An Airtours-First Choice link would be a travel powerhouse, with a big presence in package holidays and a market value of £2.8bn. It would overtake Thomson, down 8p to 179p, as the largest seller of holidays to sun and snow-seeking Brits.

However, it could run into competition problems as it would control one in four holiday trips originating in the UK, even though a recent anti-trust inquiry deemed the industry fragmented and competitive enough.

The rest of the index caught the holiday bug, with several buyers taking time off in the run-up to today's expiry of the March options, a periodic market worry.

The buyers' strike and a bit of profit-taking left the FTSE 100 down 26.3 points at 6,114.3, after an opening rally on Wall

MARKET REPORT



FRANCESCO GUERRERA

Street had helped to claw back earlier losses. The junior indices also ended in the red: the midcap shed 22 to finish at 5,463.3, while the small cap fell 1.1 to 2,373.8.

Diageo led the blue-chip retreat, fizzing up 34.5p to 678.5p. The drinks group was spiked by a remark from the LVMH chairman Bernard Arnault, the colourful Mr. Arnault said his French luxury goods group was planning to sell its 11 per cent stake in Diageo within three years.

Cadbury Schweppes showed its alcoholic rival a thing or two. The stock squirmed 25p higher to 860p on rumours that Merrill Lynch had set a 1.25p target price. The broker D&B also helped by repeating its "buy" advice.

The aerospace brigade lost altitude amid bearish noises about a cyclical downturn. Rolls-Royce spun 11.75p lower to 255p, followed by Smiths Industries, down 33.5p to 919.5p. GKN fell 21.5p to 966p after announcing its much-leaked helicopter deal with Agusta.

The good news from the blue chips came from P&O and EMI. The ferry and cruise group sailed to the top of the FTSE 100 pile with a 40p increase to 790p. The music company was also on song, rising 20.25p to 418.5p. Today is "Investor Day" at EMI and institutions wanted to stock up before meeting the new boss, Eric Nicol.

Electricity groups were powering ahead. Goldman Sachs switched on PowerGen, up 18p to 692p, with an upgrade after some price weakness. The bank also

pushed Scottish & Southern Energy with a reminder of its 700p target price. The shares buzzed 25p higher to 545p.

National Grid, up 13p to 481.25p, and Scottish Power, 10p higher at 530p, completed the utilities' party day.

Oils were in demand as the price of Brent rose overnight after the Saudis agreed some supply cuts. Shell, still looking for a partner, jumped 15p to 412p, while BP Amoco struck a 27p advance to 1,028p - a five-year peak.

For once the minnows followed the giants. Enterprise firmed 27.25p to 340p, and its would-be merger companion Lasso rose 3.75p to 138.25p. Gaelic Resources, the Irish exploration group, put on a 0.25p to 1.5p after placed 44 million shares with rival Desire Petroleum at 1.25p, raising £550,000.

British Borneo missed out on the oil frenzy, losing 0.5p to 187p after poor results.

Clothing chains were in spring sales mood despite recent setbacks of depressing official retail data. Marks & Spencer

PROTEUS, the biotechnology company, is attracting institutional interest amid talk that positive news about its drugs is imminent. The shares rose by 6.5p to 42.5p yesterday after well-received presentations to investors.

Nomura has taken a shine to the company and now holds a stake of about 9 per cent. There are whispers of a clinical breakthrough in Proteus's hypertension or prostate cancer compounds.

slid 13.75p to 379p, while Arcadia headed the midcapers' fallers with a 14p slump to 187.5p.

Among other retailers, Kingfisher suffered from further profit taking and closed 26p lower at 767p, while Morrison, the Northern supermarket chain, bucked the trend and soared 18p to 298.5p after a set of solid results.

Norbin, the security products seller, looked very unsafe after letting 27.5p escape to close at 212.5p. The culprit was a profits warning and a gloomy statement on the UK market.

A profits warning also cracked Churchill China, the houseware group. A 0.5p fall to 86p was the final damage.

Goldsmiths, the jeweller, put on a precious 14p to end the day at 181.5p after confirming a 166p-a-share management buyout.

SEAQ VOLUME: 1.17bn
SEAQ TRADES: 56,766
GULTS INDEX: 116.52 +0.13

Kwik-Fit gets back on road to recovery

KWIK-FIT HOLDINGS, the tyres and exhaust group that issued a profits warning in January, appeared to get back on the road to recovery yesterday when it reported better trading in the past few months.

Although underlying profits were flat at £58.7m for the year to February, the company said it had seen an uplift in trading in January, February and March. This followed the warning in January that unusually mild weather in December had meant that fewer drivers had their cars serviced.

The trading update caused a 34.5p per cent jump in Kwik-Fit's shares to 439.5p as several brokers upgraded their forecasts. However, some analysts were sceptical about the rise, saying that the pre-tax profit figure of £64m included £8.9m of property asset sales and that the underlying profit outcome was below City expectations.

Last year was a busy one for Sir Tom Farmer's group. It included two acquisitions, principally the £64m purchase of Speedy International, a chain of 568 tyre and exhaust centres in France, Belgium, Spain and Germany.

It also acquired the remaining 75 per cent of Apple Car

clines, a group of 70 car services and MOT test centres. Sir Tom Farmer said that last year had been a solid one for Kwik-Fit, with the group outperforming in its main markets. It increased its tyre volumes by 5 per cent against a market up by just 1 per cent. In exhausts its volumes rose by 5 per cent against an overall market down 1 per cent.

The group's strategy is to increase its dominance in the UK where it has 860 branches, while breaking into new territories overseas. The group's critics say the company is already nearing saturation point in this country, with 22 per cent of the tyre market and one-third of the exhausts market.

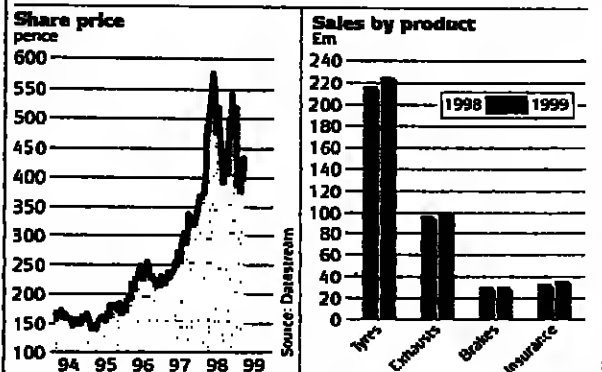
Although Kwik-Fit claims that this leaves plenty of scope for expansion, trading conditions have become tougher. Components such as exhausts are lasting longer, and new rivals such as car dealers are increasing their presence in servicing and offering longer warranties. Other problems include customers trading down to cheaper tyres, while the fall in part prices has had to be passed on to customers.

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

KWIK-FIT: AT A GLANCE

Market value: £784m, share price 439.5p (+34.5p)

Trading record	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Turnover (£m)	298.0	365.0	427.0	473.0	520.0
Profit for the year (£m)	29.3	36.3	43.3	55.1	64.3
Earnings per share (p)	11.9	14.7	17.2	22.3	26.0
Dividends per share (p)	4.4	5.0	5.6	6.5	7.5



The company is trying to expand its added-value services business with the launch of insurance policies for breakdown and travel.

These policies got off to good start when they were launched three years ago, but growth has since slowed.

Insurance profits were squeezed in the second half due to price competition. Comput-

er problems have also impeded growth rates. Kwik-Fit shares have accelerated at a pace that any boy racer would be proud of over the past five years, with a market outperformance of 53 per cent.

But on current-year forecasts of 658m they trade on a forward multiple of 18. That looks high enough for now, analysts say.

St James to sell stake in LAHC

ST JAMES Place Capital, the financial group, yesterday indicated that it was on the verge of selling a stake in the so-called life insurance "vulture fund", LAHC, as the group announced a 67 per cent profit boost in 1998.

The company, founded by life insurance guru Sir Mark Weinberg, said that profits of £36.2m had been lifted by a 20 per cent jump in new business generated by its sales force and by a better-than-average investment performance.

Sir Mark, the group chairman, said St James Place had appointed Morgan Stanley as advisers to sell a 23 per cent stake in LAHC - the Life Assurance Holding Corporation. LAHC buys all life insurers and runs them as a closed book of business.

The sale is set to go ahead

BY ANDREW VERTY

in spite of a giant contribution to the annual results from LAHC - up from £3.7m to £17.6m in 1998 - flowing from the purchase of GAN Life (UK) and Agon Life (UK), the troubled life insurers.

"We will dispose of LAHC when a convenient opportunity presents itself," said Sir Mark.

"We like the business and there is still a lot to do, but it will need more capital invested as it goes on to make bigger acquisitions. We want to dispose of it because its profits tend to be either feast or famine, which is a different shape from our business."

St James is instead pursuing a strategy of organic growth. Last year the board appointed Paul Bradshaw to head its



Sir Mark: Organic growth is St James's strategy

international business. Until now, the international life business has been geared to off-shore sales to UK customers, representing 15 per cent of sales.

Now, Sir Mark wants Mr Bradshaw, known for his record

in setting up international life insurers, to expand into Europe. It anticipates a boom in new business as French, German and Italian markets deregulate.

Analysts yesterday said that St James had produced a solid set of figures in line with expectations, but pointed out that the company was trading on a much more generous multiple than its peers.

The shares rose against the market to close up 2.5p at 284.5, valuing the group at £1.15bn.

Charles Landis of SG Securities said that this data rated the group at more than four times its embedded value of 66p a share - over twice the level of most of its peers. But the quality of the business justifies the shares as a hold, said Mr Landis.

Spin doctor's day out

THE HORSES took second place to a fascinating confrontation yesterday between Charlie Whelan, Chancellor Gordon Brown's former press adviser, and Ben Wegg-Fraser, the disturbingly youthful-looking former personal adviser to Peter Mandelson. It was Mr Mandelson, of course, who was forced to resign as trade secretary due to a leak about a certain home in Notting Hill, London, which he blamed on his political rival Mr Brown.

Observers flicked their lips at the prospect of a meeting, but were disappointed to see them deep in chimney conversation. Mr Whelan later said: "I'm losing my head better than his, at least I've found a few tips."

I also learnt that Mr Whelan performed the entire "Heart of Midlothian" to a fascinated audience the previous night to celebrate St Patrick's Day.

Mr Whelan has not been idle since leaving Number 11, writing a football column for the

PEOPLE AND BUSINESS



CHEL TENHAM DIARY

BY JOHN WILLCOCK

Observer and occasional pieces for this very organ. He is also doing the usual "this and that".

Tubby rewards

ANOTHER CHARMING chap I bumped into at Cheltenham was Jonathan Hills, the original designer and creator of BBC television's Teletubbies. Mr Hills is a distinguished illustrator and film maker who,

as well as designing the lovable characters, has also directed a film, *Una Estravaganza de Medici*, which won the Prix d'Italia. He has also designed the TV Anglia flag on telly.

Mr Hills is, however, a retiring and modest chap, saying that it was the vision of his co-creator Ann Wood that drove the Teletubbies phenomenon.

When I asked him about stories in the press that the BBC had undersold the series in the vital American market, he said that in fact Auntie Beeb had made at least £40m from the series, and that Mrs Wood had made at least double that.

he recently bet £140,000 on a series of three bets and lost on each one. One of his horses, Ishtar, was "hottest favourite all week", and duly won the Smurfit Challenge Trophy on Tuesday.

Mr McMannus also owns Le Coudray a leading contender for the Stayers Hurdle yesterday unfortunately Le Coudray only managed to come second.

Mr McMannus is part of a tightly knit group of racing pals including John Magnier, the race horse owner, Joe Lewis, the Bermudian based financier who was involved in the Enic bid for Wembley Stadium.

Fees received

1 SPOTTED Christopher Morris, the distinguished receiver from Deloitte & Touche, trotting towards the betting booths.

Mr Morris, one of Britain's insolvency specialists, is the lead liquidator of BCCI, a task that has run up over £900m in professional fees since the bank went bust eight years ago. If any creditor of BCCI wants to know what happened to those fees, they need look no further than Cheltenham. (Only joking!)

Last roundup

ANOTHER KEEN punter was Howard Bell, chief executive of Provident Financial, the firm that provides door-to-door loans. Mr Bell said the company has spent £10m expanding into Poland and Czech Republic. He seemed to be spending near that at the bookies.

Just for the record, it would be a good idea if Great Western Railway sorted out its reservation policy on its trains running to the course for next year: these were a sad fiasco.

COMPANY RESULTS			
Company	Turnover (£)	Pre-tax (£)	EPS
Alcatel (France) (F)	41,300 (42.81m)	4,320 (2.8m)	9.80p (6.70p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	41,300 (42.81m)	4,040 (2.644m)	9.40p (6.31p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	50,700 (52.85m)	1,400 (0.91m)	9.40p (6.31p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	30,714 (31,522.8m)	63,000 (65.2m)	45.1p (50.2p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	100,100 (104.0m)	5,150 (5.2m)	11.9p (12.5p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	179,100 (184.3m)	-9,700m (9,500m)	-22.9p (22.4p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	327,700 (334.2m)	49,550m (51,02m)	87.80p (91.1p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	33,720 (35.2m)	3,700 (3.7m)	3.70p (3.7p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	33,720 (35.2m)	28.1p (28.1p)	20.3p (20.4p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	21,200 (21.2m)	1.1p (1.1m)	16.3p (16.3p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	21,200 (21.2m)	65,300 (65.3m)	16.3p (16.3p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	51,400 (52.8m)	3,277m (3,277m)	0.52p (0.52p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	71,520 (71.5m)	24,000 (24,000m)	20.1p (20.1p)
Alcatel (Worldwide) (F)	2,120,000 (2,127m)	174,300 (174.3m)	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Total) (F)	2,120,000 (2,127m)	174,300 (174.3m)	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	71,520 (71.5m)	6,010 (6.12m)	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	406,200 (406.2m)	85,300 (85.3m)	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	14,600 (14,600m)	7.11p (7.11p)	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
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Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (Canada) (F)	-	-	3.7p (3.7p)
Alcatel (USA) (F)	-	-	87.8p (87.8p)
Alcatel (Japan) (F)	-	-	-22.9p (-22.9p)
Alcatel (Germany) (F)	-	-	11.9p (11.9p)
Alcatel (Italy) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Spain) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (France) (F)	-	-	9.8p (9.8p)
Alcatel (UK) (F)	-	-	9.4p (9.4p)
Alcatel (Africa) (F)	-	-	4.7p (4.7p)
Alcatel (Asia) (F)	-	-	14,000 (14,000p)
Alcatel (Europe) (F)	-	-	23.8p (24.1p)
Alcatel (Australia) (F)	-	-	20.3p (20.3p)
Alcatel (New Zealand) (F)	-	-	20.3p (2

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATES									
Country	Sterling	1 month	3 month	Dollar	1 month	3 month	Euro	1 month	3 month
UK	1.0000			0.6132	0.6134	0.6136	0.6747		
Australia	2.5895	2.5846	2.5841	1.3854	1.3855	1.3857	1.7444		
Belgium	36.8000	36.8000	36.8000	12.5000	12.5000	12.5000	13.7603		
Canada	1.4927	1.4927	1.4927	0.6568	0.6568	0.6568	0.6568		
Denmark	11.0116	10.9956	10.9962	6.7548	6.7457	6.7265	1.0000		
France	1.4821	1.4821	1.4821	0.9068	0.9068	0.9068	1.3558		
Germany	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.7779	1.7779	1.7779	1.9363		
Greece	176.2500	176.2500	176.2500	282.0600	282.0600	282.0600	321.3500		
Hong Kong	12.6338	12.6338	12.6338	0.7159	0.7159	0.7159	0.7159		
India	1.1075	1.1075	1.1075	1.7901	1.7901	1.7901	1.7901		
Japan	191.8800	191.8800	191.8800	1.7135	1.7135	1.7135	1.7135		
Malaysia	6.1529	6.1529	6.1529	0.9450	0.9450	0.9450	1.2057		
Netherlands	2.2663	2.2663	2.2663	0.5319	0.5319	0.5319	0.5319		
New Zealand	1.3291	1.3291	1.3291	0.7188	0.7188	0.7188	0.7188		
Norway	12.5358	12.5358	12.5358	181.9500	181.9500	181.9500	200.4800		
Portugal	207.2000	207.2000	207.2000	3.7505	3.7505	3.7505	4.7267		
Singapore	1.3163	1.3163	1.3163	0.6508	0.6508	0.6508	0.6508		
South Africa	10.1925	10.1925	10.1925	151.2500	151.2500	151.2500	166.2600		
Spain	164.9300	164.9300	164.9300	1.4487	1.4487	1.4487	1.4487		
Sweden	131.7700	131.7700	131.7700	0.8030	0.8030	0.8030	0.8030		
Switzerland	2.2703	2.2703	2.2703	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	0.9088		
US	1.6308								

OTHER SPOT RATES					
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6226	0.9950	Oman	0.6197	0.3800
Brazil	3.0496	1.8700	Pakistan	74.642	45.770
China	13.291	8.1500	Philippines	61.921	37.970
Czech Rep	56.188	34.454	Poland	6.3642	3.9025
Egypt	5.5618	2.4105	Russia	5.9373	3.6408
Ghana	389.3	2381.0	Saudi Arabia	3892.7	2487.0
Hungary	377.33	231.38	South Korea	19.760	1211.70
India	69.187	42.423	Taiwan	33.066	32.540
Indonesia	14625.8	8.9685	Thailand	61.073	37.490
Nigeria	0.4939	0.3029	Turkey	59.240	38.831
Poland	133.79	62.000	UAE	5.9891	3.6725

INTEREST RATES									
Base	5.50%	Discount	5.25%	Repo/(w)	3.15%				
European Central Bank <td></td> <td>Discount<td>3.25%<td>Discount<td>0.50%</td></td></td></td>		Discount <td>3.25%<td>Discount<td>0.50%</td></td></td>	3.25% <td>Discount<td>0.50%</td></td>	Discount <td>0.50%</td>	0.50%				
O/N Marginal <td>4.50%<td>Discount<td>5.00%<td>Discount<td>1.00%</td></td></td></td></td>	4.50% <td>Discount<td>5.00%<td>Discount<td>1.00%</td></td></td></td>	Discount <td>5.00%<td>Discount<td>1.00%</td></td></td>	5.00% <td>Discount<td>1.00%</td></td>	Discount <td>1.00%</td>	1.00%				
O/N Facility <td>2.00%<td>Discount<td>4.50%<td>Lombard<td>3.13%</td></td></td></td></td>	2.00% <td>Discount<td>4.50%<td>Lombard<td>3.13%</td></td></td></td>	Discount <td>4.50%<td>Lombard<td>3.13%</td></td></td>	4.50% <td>Lombard<td>3.13%</td></td>	Lombard <td>3.13%</td>	3.13%				
Repo <td>3.00%<td>Discount<td>4.69%<td></td><td></td></td></td></td>	3.00% <td>Discount<td>4.69%<td></td><td></td></td></td>	Discount <td>4.69%<td></td><td></td></td>	4.69% <td></td> <td></td>						
Canada <td>6.75%<td>Discount<td></td><td></td><td></td></td></td>	6.75% <td>Discount<td></td><td></td><td></td></td>	Discount <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>							
Prime <td>6.75%<td>Discount<td></td><td></td><td></td></td></td>	6.75% <td>Discount<td></td><td></td><td></td></td>	Discount <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>							
Sweden <td></td> <td>Discount<td></td><td></td><td></td></td>		Discount <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>							

BOND YIELDS									
	1yr	2yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	30yr			
Australia	4.66	4.17	4.12	4.92	5.18	4.07			
Canada	4.55	4.01	3.98	4.03	4.04	4.16			
Denmark	2.97	0.00	2.93	0.00	3.57	0.00			
Germany	4.86	-0.01	5.09	-0.02	5.04	-0.01			
Greece	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.06	0.00			
Ireland	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.00	3.34	-0.03			
France	3.03	-0.01	3.02	-0.01	2.97	-0.02			
Italy	2.96	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.24	-0.04			
Japan	0.09	0.01	0.15	0.00	0.52	-0.02			
Spain	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.00	3.24	-0.03			
UK	2.96	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.24	-0.03			
US	4.38	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.20	0.06			
Sweden	1.29	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.55	0.01			
Switzerland	4.96	0.01	4.96	0.01	5.51	0.03			
US	4.38	0.13	0.47	0.28	4.97	0.02			

MONEY MARKET RATES									
	1yr	2yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	30yr			
Australia	4.66	4.17	4.12	4.92	5.18	4.07			
Canada	4.55	4.01	3.98	4.03	4.04	4.16			
Denmark	2.97	0.00	2.93	0.00	3.57	0.00			
Germany	4.86	-0.01	5.09	-0.02	5.04	-0.01			
Greece	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.06	0.00			
Ireland	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.00	3.34	-0.03			
France	3.03	-0.01	3.02	-0.01	2.97	-0.02			
Italy	2.96	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.24	-0.04			
Japan	0.09	0.01	0.15	0.00	0.52	-0.02			
Spain	3.03	-0.01	3.02	0.00	3.24	-0.03			
UK	2.96	-0.01	3.02	0.01	3.24	-0.03			
US	4.38	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.20	0.06			
Sweden	1.29	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.55	0.01			
Switzerland	4.96	0.01	4.96	0.01	5.51	0.03			
US	4.38	0.13	0.47	0.28	4.97	0.02			

	Overnight Bk Offer	1 week Bk Offer	1 month Bk Offer	3 months Bk Offer	6 months Bk Offer	1 year Bk Offer
Treasury Bills			5.20 5.10	5.04 5.04		
Treasury Notes		5.41 5.41	5.45 5.45	5.39 5.39	5.33 5.33	5.335 5.33
Treasury Deposits	5.13 5.38	5.25 5.38	5.31 5.38	5.23 5.33	5.19 5.31	5.195 5.25
Commercial Paper	5.38 5.50	5.44 5.50	5.34 5.41	5.25 5.31	5.19 5.25	5.165 5.22
Mortgage Bank Bills			5.34 5.41	5.11 5.01	5.02 4.92	
Floating CDs			5.36 5.38	5.25 5.17	5.22 5.15	5.235 5.15
Certificate CDs			4.83	4.69	4.94	
Euro Inter	3.03 3.03	3.04 3.04	3.03 3.03	3.01 3.01	3.02 3.01	3.023 0.02

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SPORT

Five Nations' Championship: Inspirational stand-off is determined to spark France in Twickenham debut tomorrow

Castaignède to lead French revolt

BY IAN BORTHWICK

"I JUST CAN'T wait to get back on the field. To get to Twickenham, play my guts out, and show people what I am really capable of doing." On a wind-swept training ground on the outskirts of Castres in south-west France last week, Thomas Castaignède was practising goal kicking before training with his club team. Three days had passed since the shock defeat against Wales in Paris but, by the rings under his eyes and his thousand-yard stare, you could tell that French rugby's golden boy was still struggling to come to terms with the loss.

The man who so often in his career had snatched victory for France in the dying seconds was this time on the receiving end of what the French call *la glorieuse incertitude du sport*. His last-minute penalty attempt against Wales, 20 metres from the line and 10 in from the right-hand touch, sailed across the front of the posts, allowing Wales to celebrate their first win in Paris for 24 years. "I haven't slept since Saturday," said Castaignède, repeatedly - almost obsessively - kicking goals from exactly the same spot. "I keep going through the match over and over in my head, and I still can't believe we lost. We all feel frustrated and annoyed with ourselves because we know that game was there for the taking."

Perhaps, for someone who until now appears to have led a charmed existence, a little suffering can do no harm.

All his life Castaignède seems to have gone from success to success. At 24, apart from his 24 international caps for France, he has already won the French national club championship four times with Stade Toulousain, won the European Cup with the same club, and, whether at stand-off or centre, become one of the undoubted foundation stones of the French team.

With his first cap on French soil he beat the All Blacks in a historic upset victory in Toulouse in November 1995. Scarcely two months later, and only hours away from his 21st birthday, Castaignède won his first Five Nations cap, polishing it off with that dropped goal from 30 metres to beat England in the dying seconds at the Parc des Princes.

Last year against England at the Stade de France, Castaignède's defence, notably on the charging Lawrence Dallaglio, was one of the outstanding features of the French performance. But it is on attack that the bottle-blond flyer provides the impetus and the spark for France, his blistering acceleration and unerring eye for the gap, honed from years of playing centre, making him the kind of stand-off capable of breaking the gain-line and of immediately putting his team on the front foot.

While his natural ebullience and intuitive flair make Castaignède what Jo Maso calls "the embodiment of French style", his impish smile and natural good looks (not to



Thomas Castaignède - 'the embodiment of French style' - demonstrates his unerring eye for a gap in preparation for tomorrow's crucial match against England

AP

mention passably fluent English) also make him the automatic target for media attention on both sides of the channel. In many ways he represents the kind of fully-rounded individual which has unfortunately become, even in rugby, a rarity in international sport.

"It's true that I have been fortunate," he concedes. "I must have been born under a lucky star or something. I have always lived in a virtual world. There have been times when I have even asked myself if it was real, when everything was going so well that I was convinced there was a hitch somewhere. I remember saying to myself: *La vie, c'est pas ça! C'est pas possible!*"

As brilliant on the field as he is in the classroom, Castaignède holds the equivalent of a Doctorate in Engineering from the highly respected Institut National des Sciences Appliquées (National Institute of

Applied Science) in Toulouse, specialising in industrial processes and the environment.

However, behind this impressive list of achievements, behind the nonchalant carefree exterior, lies a determined young man who has always worked hard, both at his game and his studies. "I was always a real swot at school," he recalls. "I would never go to a history class without having revised the previous lesson."

I hated the idea of being left behind in anything."

At eight years old, growing up in Mont de Marsan - a small town whose club has produced names like Benoit Duga, Christian Darrouy, or the archetypal French centres Guy and André Boniface - he hated being left behind by the older boys. So he started working on his game in the back yard, and by the age of nine could not only pass equally well

to the left as the right, but also kick penalties from 40 metres. "I am just a hard worker, I have always imposed that discipline on myself," he insists. "In the beginning I had no natural skill. But I was just determined to succeed, and once I got an idea into my head, it is very difficult to change my mind."

Even today the same ethos governs his approach to the game. "No matter what he is doing,

Thomas is always extremely demanding of himself," says his teammate, Christian Calmano. "He is always questioning, always doubting, never satisfied. That is his strength."

Strangely, for one who has already beaten England twice in his career (in 1996 and 1998) Castaignède, like the majority of the players in this French side, has never played at Twickenham. "I have heard so much about this ground, but it is not something that intimidates me. I just can't wait to play there."

Despite the sobering loss to Wales, or more accurately because of it, the challenge of England seems to have hardened his resolve. "This year's Five Nations is much harder, much closer fought than in the past," he said, "but England still remains our No 1 opponent. Of course we are going there as underdogs, but there is a feeling of

revolt in the camp, and we will not be giving in easily."

For Castaignède, the most impressive thing about England is the forward pack, especially the back row and the second row. And of course Jonny Wilkinson, who has already made a big impression on the Tricolores. "He is very young, but there are not many weaknesses in his game. He is very skilled with the ball in hand and courageous on defence. We are going to have to watch him very closely, and not give him a centimetre of space in which to move."

Another player Castaignède will be watching closely is his counterpart, Mike Catt, known to the French back-line as "Michel Chat". "I like the way he plays. In terms of his approach to the game I much prefer Chat to Paul Grayson. For me he is less rigorous than Grayson, but he is more imaginative," concludes Castaignède. "I suppose he is more like me."

TOMORROW

I've learned so much from him over the last couple of seasons: how to deal with the most pressurised situations, how to keep a cool head when others are letting it all slip, how to compete against the most competitive people around'

England's Jonny Wilkinson (left) tells Chris Hewett about the debt he owes to Rob Andrew



Sharkey scrums down in a tough proving ground

ACCORDING TO remarks attributed to a senior figure within the BBC last week, women do not much care for rugby league. That will come as news to the high female proportion of the crowd at grounds like Leeds and Wigan - and even more so to the increasing numbers of women in positions of power and influence within the game.

When Wigan play at Headingley tonight, for instance, the longest-serving member of their team, on or off the field, will not be some craggy-faced prop or an aged retainer who has scrambled away beneath the stand, man and boy, in some capacity since Billy Boston was a lad.

It will be Mary Sharkey, who arrived at Central Park as the office junior in 1981 and who was confirmed last week as the club's first woman director.

"I was straight out of school and looking for a full-time job, when a friend of mine who was working for Maurice Lindsay in his own business told me that there might be something going at Wigan," she recalls. She arrived for the interview and Lindsay admits to having completely forgotten about her, leaving her in a corridor for an hour and 40 minutes.

"I was immediately impressed by her stickability and she got the job,"

Rising from tea-maker to director, Wigan's wonder woman has made it in the man's world of rugby league. By Dave Hadfield

says Lindsay, who was then the club's vice-chairman. It was not quite the dream appointment that it would be for many of the young girls who will be on the terraces tonight, because the then Mary Charnock was not exactly a devoted Wigan fan. "I didn't go to the games, although if you live in Wigan you follow the rugby team."

Her initial contribution to the club's well-being consisted of the usual range of junior secretarial duties, "including making the tea". It was in 1984, when Wigan went back to Wembley for the first time in 14 years, that the pace of the job changed.

"Even though we lost, it was from that point that things got busier and the club started to grow. But I'd rather be busy." That was just as well, because the club in those days could be a frantic place to work. "Her great quality was her unfatigability," says Lindsay. "That and a good sense of humour."

Some of the pranks played on Lindsay in those days are the stuff of Wigan legend and run counter to the subsequent image of him as an

impossible taskmaster. There was the time he was dispatched to the bank manager to ask for another loan, with something very embarrassing slipped surreptitiously into the top of his briefcase, not to mention the unsolved case of the lipstick-smearing underpants that arrived for him in the post.

In many ways, those heady days when the club was just beginning to take off remain her favourite times at Central Park. "There was a really good atmosphere around the club, with players like Danny Campbell here and Graeme West and Howie Tamati coming in. They were a good set of players."

Of all the players who have come and gone since, Mary can find little bad to say. "You have to know who you can laugh and joke with and who you can't, but I've never really had a bad word with any of them." And this, remember, is at a club that once housed the competitive egos of Ellery Hanley, Andy Gregory and Shaun Edwards.

Lindsay is full of admiration for the way she has managed the role of "an attractive female next door to

a dressing-room full of hot-blooded young men. She has very cleverly kept them at a distance."

That distance is magnified by her seniority in the administration of the club. In succession, she has become club secretary, football manager and, as ratified by last week's AGM, director. There have been strong women behind the scenes at Central Park in the past, but none who have achieved what she has.

"I'm so proud of her," says Lindsay, whose track record of encouraging female talent within the game is good, from Emma Rosewarne at the Rugby League to Sally Bolton at Super League. "They just need to be given an opportunity," he says.

Mary has other role models to which she can refer. Kath Hetherington, the co-founder of the Sheffield Eagles and now the Gateshead Thunder and one of the most redoubtable people in the game, helped her through her first meeting of the Rugby League Council, while Denise Cockett, the Castleford secretary, is a close friend with whom she frequently compares notes.



Mary Sharkey at her second home, Central Park, where she is now a director Simon Wilkinson

"We ring each other if we need to discuss anything, but there are a lot more women involved in rugby league than people seem to realise," she says.

The game would like there to be more women. The League now supports a development officer for

the women's game, while Super League's advertising for the new season is unashamedly aimed at the female market, with beefcake on posters and a cinema campaign screened alongside the movie *You've Got Mail*.

Not inappropriate, perhaps, for

someone who started her working life at Central Park opening the post. Tonight she will be in the directors' box, as unflappable as she was when the final demands came in. "I don't get nervous at matches," she says. "I leave that to the coaches and players."

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Guscott says the French are 'scary'

THE APPARENTLY beleaguered French have announced yet another personnel change for tomorrow's Five Nations rumble with England at Twickenham, replacing one Stade Francais wing, Thomas Lombard, with another, Christophe Dominici. In a sense, though, Lombard's leg injury does not matter a brass centime as Jeremy Guscott, a self-confessed Francophile, was quick to agree yesterday, the blue-shirted visitors could field Brigitte Bardot and the Roux brothers in their three-quarter line and still run in heavenly tries from every last corner of the pitch.

"To my way of thinking, the French are the best counter-attackers in the world," said Guscott during a 20-minute celebration of Tricolore ingenuity. "They run angles and do things in narrow channels that no other international team can even hope to emulate and, without being born and bred there, it is impossible to fully understand them. When you watch video footage of their moves, everything seems quite natural; however, when you're actually facing them on the pitch, it is often difficult to see where they're coming from. Sometimes, they pass blind and assume a colleague will arrive to continue the move. Believe me, that takes incredible confidence. I love playing against the French because I find them scary. It's always a seat-of-the-pants job because of their unpredictability and willingness to run the ball from anywhere. We've been working extremely hard on our defence over the last few months but, if your op-

RUGBY UNION
BY CHRIS HEWETT

ponents run great angles, great lines and have great timing, there is nothing you can do to stop them."

Fraise indeed: it was almost as if England's revered triple Lion wished he had been born in Biarritz and christened by Serge Blanco. But when you have pocketed very nearly 60 caps, played in a World Cup final and established yourself as one of the most recognisable rugby players on the planet, you can

Dallaglio yesterday: 'A game against France is always a big prospect'

be forgiven the odd flight of fancy. Guscott has always gloried in the unique pressures of an Anglo-French conflict; indeed, the Tricolours remain his dream opponents precisely because they are capable of giving him nightmares.

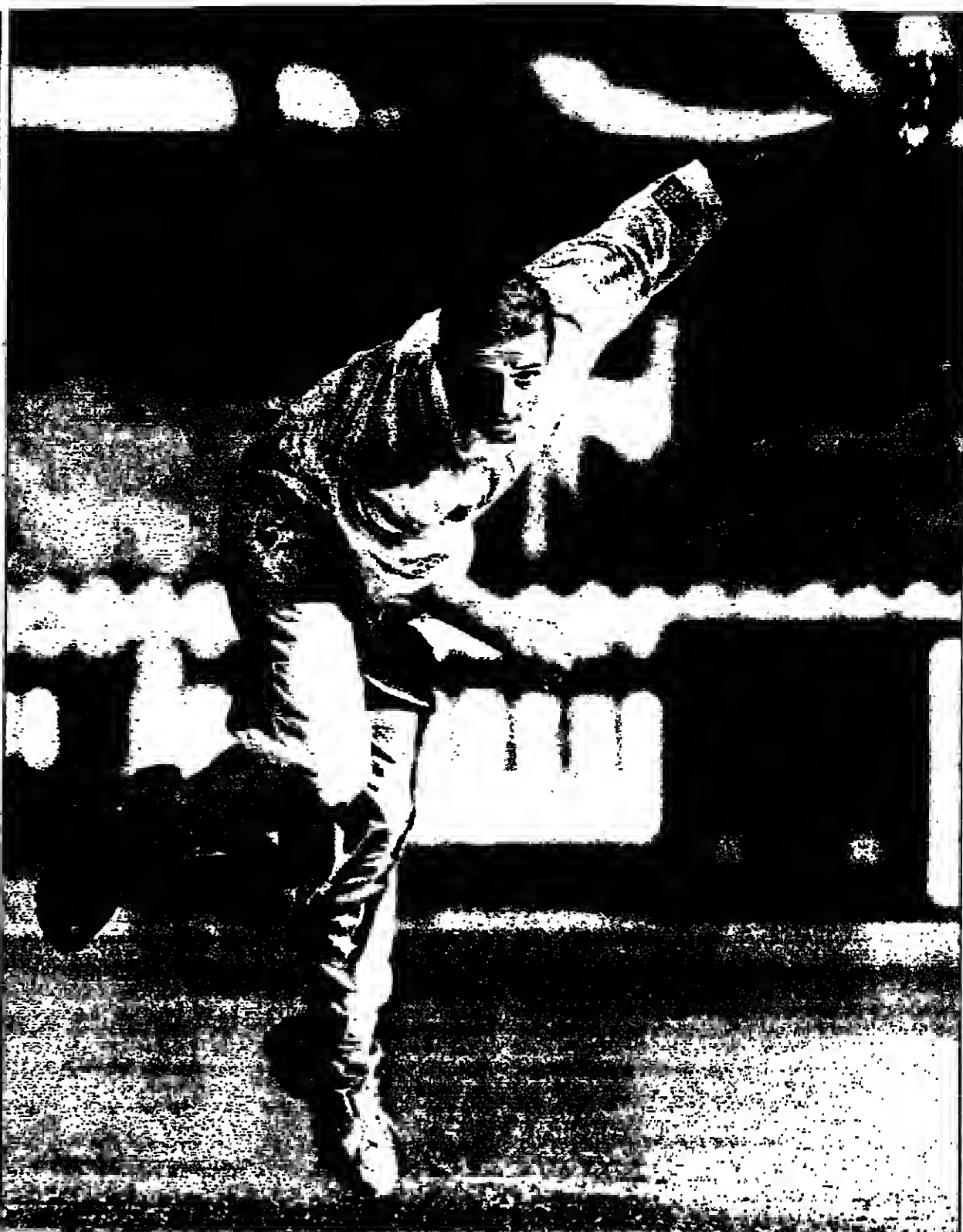
"Back in the early years of the decade, when Brian Moore was at his best as England's winder-up-in-chief, we seemed to get to the French on a mental level," he continued. "The more desperate they became to get the English monkey off their backs, the more heat they put themselves under. That was why they were so relieved when they finally beat us in the last World Cup. It was incredibly important to them, even though the match itself was a pretty poor advert. Now they seem to be themselves again and I'm thankful for that. I think they bring something special to the game."

On the face of it, Guscott's eulogy sounded suspiciously like an attempt to talk up the French, just as Pierre Villepreux, the visitors' coach, talked up the English on Wednesday. Yet, although the bookmakers have Clive Woodward's Grand Slam-chasing Twickenhamites as odds-on favourites, there is a strong feeling in the home camp that a wounded Tricolore is a whole lot more dangerous than an over-confident one. Indeed, England suspect the French took Wales far too lightly in Paris 13 days ago and that their defeat on that occasion was a freak circumstance of their own making.

"Forget the events of two weeks ago," said Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain. "Let's just remember that for all the newcomers in the three-quarter line and the back row, the main body of players who brought France back-to-back Grand Slams are still there: Ibanez, Tournaire, the two locks, Carboneau, Castaignede. Speaking as a loose forward, I think the new unit of Castel, Lievreumont and Juliet looks very physical, very talented. I think this will definitely be one of the most interesting areas tomorrow."

"A game against France is always a big prospect because they have it in them to be the best side in the world. My only regret is that we meet them only once a season and have had to wait more than 12 months for another shot at them following our defeat in Paris last year. We should play them more often in my view; the Australians are now a power in the world game precisely because they took advantage of their proximity to New Zealand. The English Channel is not as wide as the Tasman, so why not increase the number of fixtures?"

Far from diluting the French reserves of experience, Lombard's late withdrawal has had the opposite effect; Dominici at least played against Guscott and company last season - indeed, he scored a try - and hence becomes the only member of a reconstructed three-quarter line to have mixed it with the English foe. "I don't think the unfamiliarity of this French side has much to do with anything," said Dallaglio, guardedly. "They have a conveyor belt over there and it produces ball-handling forwards and running backs by the dozen." We shall see.



South Africa's opening bowler Steve Elworthy lets a delivery fly on day one in Wellington yesterday Reuters

Stead and Harris help Kiwis to stage recovery

CRICKET
BY HENRY BLOFIELD
in Wellington

New Zealand 211-6
v South Africa

hunch, no end of good. The hundred stand came up in 138 minutes and then the third of three fours in an over off Cronje, a square-cut, took Stead to 50 in 107 balls with eight fours.

Harris's 50 came four overs later when he pulled a long-hop from Paul Adams to the boundary and he had faced 119 balls. Ten runs and six overs later, Pollock took the second new ball and

New Zealand's recovery was scuppered in the closing overs when it removed first Stead and then the nightwatchman, Daniel Vettori.

New Zealand had been awful in the first part of the day even though Allan Donald's stomach muscle strain had prevented him from turning out for South Africa. In the ninth over, Matt Horne forgot his footwork when coming forward to Pollock and was caught at slip. At 32, Brian Young drove, also without footwork and at third slip Jonny Rhodes made an awkward catch look easy.

The score was 50 for 2 at lunch and afterwards Nathan Astle was yorked by Elworthy.

One run later, at 58, Roger Twose, who had looked hopelessly out of his depth for 79 balls, failed to take his bat out of the way and was caught behind off Elworthy.

First day New Zealand won toss
NEW ZEALAND - First innings
M J Horne c Cullinan b Pollock... 2
B A Young c Rhodes b Kallis... 18
R G Twose c Boucher b Elworthy... 12
N J Astle b Elworthy... 20
G R Stead c Pollock b Elworthy... 58
C J Harris not out... 56
D L Vettori c Kallis b Elworthy... 4
A C Parore not out... 0
Extras (188 total)... 21
Total (for 6, 90 overs)... 211
Fall: 1-7, 2-32, 3-57, 4-58, 5-203, 6-207.
To bat: 10 J Kallis, 5 B Donald, 5 B O'Connell.
Bowling: Pollock 22-10-30-1 (3nb); Elworthy 21-7-58-4; Kallis 20-5-44-1; Kuznetsov 15-7-33-2; Adams 7-5-12-0; Cronje 5-3-16-0.
SOUTH AFRICA: G Kirsten, H H Gibbs, J H Kallis, D L Vettori, W J Cronje, J N Rhodes, S M Pollock, M V Boucher, C Kallis, P R Adams, S Elworthy.
Umpires: D B Cowie (NZ) and S Venkatraman (SA).

Thorpe declared fit for Sharjah

GRAHAM THORPE, the Surrey batsman, has been given a clean bill of health ahead of England's World Cup campaign. The 29-year-old left-hander, who has been suffering from a debilitating back injury which saw him leave the Ashes tour to Australia, has been cleared by Wayne Morton, the England physiotherapist, in advance of next month's Sharjah one-day tournament.

"Obviously I am a bit apprehensive but the last two months have been pretty tough and the last week has been intense," Thorpe said. "I have had something like 15 nets and my back's really been put through its paces. We are off to Sharjah in 12 days time and I am really looking forward to it."

Surrey are keen to re-sign Afghanistan's left-hander, the Pakistan off-spinner, as their overseas player for 1999. "Saragim had a great season for us last year and we would like him to come back," said Adam Hoolioke, the Surrey captain, said. "We know he would miss the start of the season but our only concern is whether or not he would have to depart before the end of the season on international duty."

Giovanelli reprieve incurs Scots' anger

THE SCOTTISH Rugby Union has criticised the decision to exonerate the Italian captain, Massimo Giovanelli, who was sent off for stamping on Scotland's No 8 Eric Peters in the recent friendly between the two sides.

Giovanelli was handed an eight-week ban by a Five Nations disciplinary committee immediately after the game. However, an appeals tribunal has ruled that because the game was not a Five Nations contest, even though the game was run under Five Nations regulations, the ban should not apply. Giovanelli is now free to play with immediate effect. An SRU statement last night described the decision as unacceptable and leaves open the possibility of pursuing the matter through the courts.

"We do not accept 'procedural matters' should override the fact that the referee and touch judge considered Mr Giovanelli should be dismissed from the field for an act of foul play," said the SRU chief executive, Bill Watson. "We will not rest until this appalling act is justly penalised for the good of our game."

SRU officials are discussing the matter with the International Rugby Board and the Italian Rugby Federation. Previously the IRB has been warned by the police that in

order to exclude the possibility of bodies outside the sport taking action against violent play, they must ensure that punishments are handed out in a proper fashion.

The Ireland captain, Paddy Johns, has given his country a pre-match boost ahead of the Five Nations clash with Scotland at Murrayfield by announcing he is quitting the English game. Johns, who wins his 50th cap tomorrow, will leave Saracens after three years with the London club and join the European Cup winners Ulster, where he played for six seasons before moving to England. He becomes the latest - and biggest - name to cross the Irish Sea, following the likes of Eric Miller, Jonathan Bell and David Humphreys, who will all appear alongside Johns in the big Edinburgh confrontation.

"There are several reasons behind my decision, there is no one factor," said Johns. "I have had a very enjoyable three years with Saracens but this is a new challenge for me."

Now Johns is setting his sights on a Murrayfield success to give Ireland a 50 per cent winning record in the Five Nations. "This is our last game and, although we would love to finish with a flourish, we want to win," he said.

Depleted Leeds still a threat to Wigan

RUGBY LEAGUE
BY DAVE HADFIELD

TIME HAS run out too quickly for two of Leeds' big guns and one of their most effective wildcards as they prepare to resume their struggle for supremacy against Wigan.

Their coach, Graham Murray, has named a team without Richie Blackmore, Adrian Morley and Marcus St Hillaire for tonight's match at Headingley, although all three are now close to fitness.

The loss of Morley, in particular, would have been crippling not long ago. Wigan will not be-

leave he is out until they see him in the stand but Andy Hay - so often a substitute last season - has proved a capable member of the starting line-up lately.

Hay scored a hat-trick against Widnes in the Challenge Cup last Sunday and will have the same players around him - with Murray selecting the same 17 - but predicting a bigger role for 18-year-old Kevin Sinfield.

"He might find himself on the park a lot earlier than last week," said Murray. "He played 25 minutes at Widnes and changed the whole complexion of the game."

Only a month after Leeds' victory in the Challenge Cup, this match means enough for Wigan coach, John Monie, to abandon his usual detachment.

"Every time you pick up a paper, it's all about Leeds for the double. It's starting to grate with us and I'm sure it's grating with Bradford," he said. "We

seem to have gone from champions to also-rans. It's building up a really strong rivalry between the two clubs - but I think that's a good thing."

Wigan lost twice to Leeds in Super League last year, before beating them in the play-offs and the Grand Final. "But I don't want to leave it until the semi-finals before we beat Leeds this time," Monie said. "That made it such hard work last time."

For tonight's showdown, which could attract a Super League record crowd now that

Headingley has been restored to its 23,000 capacity, Monie is still without Denis Betts, Tony Smith and probably Simon Haughton as well. Against that, he has a squad of players - particularly the newcomers, Mark Reber, Greg Ffytche and Brett Goldspink - who know each other's play far better than they did when they were last there.

Unlike Leeds, they do not have a Challenge Cup semi-final hanging over them - and that can still be a factor in matches like these.

NFL votes for radical instant replay challenge system

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

A SEASON littered with mistakes by officials has resulted in the National Football League voting to bring back instant video replays for the 1999 season.

NFL owners voted 20-3 in favour of installing a radical instant replay challenge system. A total of 24 votes from the 31

owners were needed for approval. The only teams to vote against replays - which were used as an aid to officials from 1986 to 1991 - were the Arizona Cardinals, Cincinnati Bengals and New York Jets.

"Part of the deal was to use it for just one year," said Mike Holmgren, the co-chairman of the competition committee. "If it's a good thing we want to keep it in. But the owners have committed to this just for 1999."

Under the new guidelines coaches will be given two challenges per game, with referees

making final decisions from sideline monitors. Any challenge not supported by the referee will cost the team a time-out.

There will also be a replay assistant in the press box to review any controversial plays in the final two minutes of both halves and throughout an over-

time period. However, the referee on the field will determine if a play will be reversed after reviewing the replay.

"The difference this time is no more will the [replay] guy in the booth make the decision, the ref on the field makes the call," said Rick McKay, the Tampa Bay general manager.

Oatley gives RAF a late lift

HOCKEY
BY BILL COLWILL

Navy
Royal Air Force

LAST-MINUTE goals sank the Navy in both their senior games yesterday in the Inter Services Championship at Aldershot, the men going down 3-2 to the RAF and the women by the same score to the Army.

In a scrappy opening session in which both sides squandered a number of chances, the RAF always looked the more dangerous, although the best chance fell to the Navy's lone front-runner, Guy Dale-Smith. It was the RAF however who opened the scoring when Andy Beresford found himself unmarked at the far post to tap in a cross from Steve Welham.

The RAF's midfield pairing of Finlay McLean and the captain David Oatley were slowly beginning to dominate the game, with Graeme Cartmell and Neil Powell looking dangerous up front. It required desperate defending from the Navy in which the goalkeeper Richard Potter was called upon to make a string of fine saves, together with some timely interceptions from James Dean to prevent the airmen from going further ahead.

With the RAF wasting two penalty corners either side of the interval, it was very much against the run of play that Dale-Smith broke through the RAF ranks and, struggling off the attentions of three defenders, he slipped the ball under the goalkeeper Sumit Raval for the equaliser seven minutes into the second half.

Within seconds of the resumption the airmen were again in the lead when Beresford burst through to score his second. With the Navy becoming more adventurous, with Brett Morgan joining in the attack, their reward came in the 53rd minute with the awarding of a penalty corner. Mark McLintock's powerful drag shot went in off the underside of the crossbar.

Handicapped by the temporary suspension of Danny Makuruk for an uncompromising tackle on McLean, the Navy's defence were again struggling, conceding three late penalty corners. The first was wasted as their complicated corner drill failed and the second saw Chris Kimber's shot going just wide. The third appeared wasted as another complicated move appeared to break down, only for Oatley to finally bundle the ball under a fringe Potter for a last-minute winner.

The RAF today play the defending champions, the Army, who on Wednesday beat the Navy 4-0, for the title.

In the women's game the Navy, with goals from Charlotte Atkinson and Vicki Burrows, led the Army against the run of play until two goals from Claire Ryding in the closing minutes gave them an unexpected victory. Earlier, Toni Robinson had scored the opening goal for the Army.

Royal Air Force: S Raval; C Kimber; A Gungor; P Jacobs; B Slack; D Oatley (capt); F McLintock; A Beresford; S Welham; G Cartmell; N Powell.
Umpires: N Smith and A Notman.

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Kitzbühel	100%	Spring conditions 240	160	11.3	-4C	Mixed
Lofen	100%	V good at altitude 405	220	9.3	-3C	Mixed
BULGARIA						
Pamporovo	100%	Good skiing	45 120	8.3	-2C	Sunny/cold
CANADA						
Whistler	100%	Packed powder	180 440	10.3	-5C	Snow shows
FRANCE						
Avoriaz	85%	Hard packed	60 280	6.3	3C	Uncertain
Barèges	50%	Good at altitude	90 130	7.3	0C	Variable
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Livigno	100%	Excellent	78 197	6.3	-2C	Mild/colder
Macugnaga	100%	Lower deterioration	40 160	6.3	2C	Changeable
SCOTLAND						
Gairnmore	50%	Variable conds	5 35	18.3	0C	Snow/wind
SWITZERLAND						
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Cheltenham Festival: A grey who looked destined for highest honours is carried from the track in a horse ambulance

Mill limps into troubled future

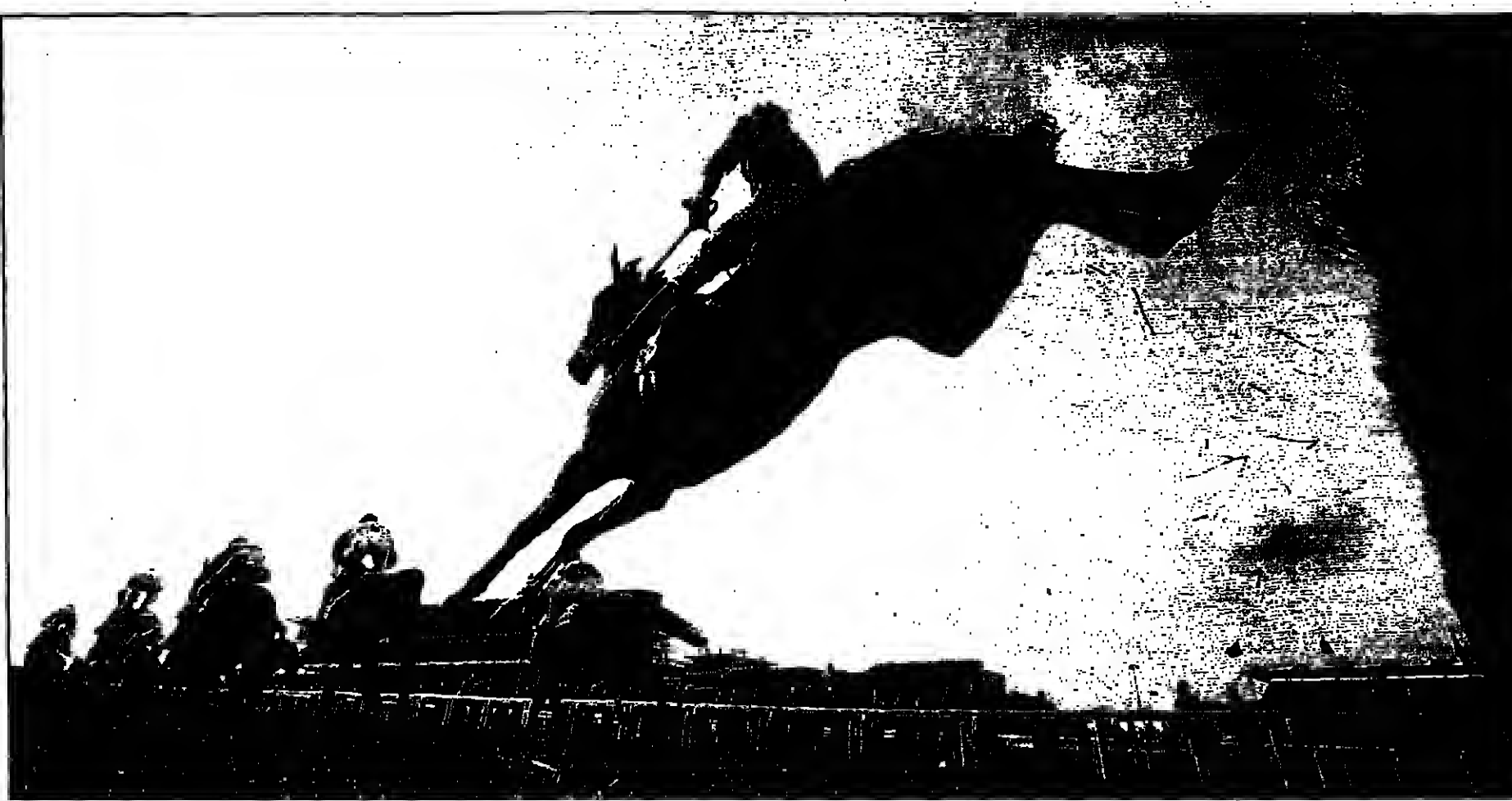
'He didn't know he was a 66-1 shot'

Andrew Longmore on a jockey whose Festival has been marred by serious injury to horses on the brink of fame

NO ONE need tell Venetia Williams about the school of hard knocks. Yesterday she graduated with honours. Her Teetotum Mill, five minutes before carrying the throbbing hopes of England, transported back from the racecourse not with the delight even the most pragmatic of trainers must have imagined but in the back of the same horse ambulance which had whisked away the future of poor Nick Dundee 24 hours before. Peering out of a tiny side window of the ambulance on the way to the equine hospital, Teetotum Mill's lad had just one question: "Who's won?" Such is the relentless rolling rhythm of racing.

News of See More Business's success did not lift his heart, but, in time, the shifting fortunes of Paul Nicholls, the winning trainer, might help to ease Williams' suffering. A year ago, the busy west countryman was incandescent with rage after the Martin-Pipe trained Cyborgo had carried out See More Business and ensured another winnerless Cheltenham. This time, he was dancing a jig with his farrier in the centre of the paddock - an unlikely tango it was too - and celebrating his third winner of the meeting.

So much had gone perfectly for Williams' stable this season, she must have been expecting the punch line. But not one quite this stunning. Teetotum Mill, the grey, and his jet black-haired young trainer, with shoe-buckles of gold and a touch to match, had swept all



Tail-end Charlie: Unsinkable Boxer brings up the rear in the Cheltenham Gold Cup as See More Business & Co. scoot away

David Ashdown

before them, each acting as chief publicist to the other's brilliance. At last, a new face to brighten the ranks, a natural successor to the role of women's champion so conveniently and carefully vacated by Jenny Pittman on the morning of the Festival, for Mrs P read Miss V. Not just yet. Racing does not relinquish its spoils so readily.

In Cheltenham's pre-parade ring, Teetotum Mill had looked a picture, one of three greys in the race, the lightest of the three and the best fancied. The

race had been billed, with more than a touch of hyperbole, as potentially the most thrilling duel of English and Irish since the days of Arkle and Mill House. But those two were seasoned protagonists; this was a race into the unknown for both Teetotum Mill, an upwardly mobile point-to-pointer, and Florida Pearl, the latest pride of Ireland.

The picture of the day, the story of the race, was unwittingly captured right there in the backstage fusing. Williams had guided her charge into one of the rows of stables and

shut the double doors, barring the owners and press from an intensely private ritual.

Only the red and white parade cloth, with the number 12 and the name Teetotum Mill in big bold letters hung out over the door. In the stable next door, Nicholls bustled around the sturdy frame of See More Business.

The race itself was an eerie rerun of an old video. Coming down the hill, just past the spot where the hopes of See More Business had been buried in 1998, Norman Williamson

warned Richard Dunwoody that he was about to pull out. Dunwoody pulled Florida Pearl back a fraction and Teetotum Mill veered sharply to the right and out of the race. Watching on the big screen near the paddock, Venetia Williams' heart must have sunk almost as low as the thousands of English supporters who had dug deep to send their champion off as narrow second favourite.

Worst fears were confirmed when Williamson jumped straight out of the saddle and, for the second time in two days,

led his horse towards the racecourse ambulance. The problem was later diagnosed as tendon damage. Philip Arkwright, the clerk of the course, said that Teetotum Mill had slipped the tendon off his off-hind hock. The horse was strapped up before being despatched to Williams' vet, Liam Kearns. "They'll probably be able to operate on the leg and get it right, but it's a repetitive injury," Arkwright added.

After riding a double on the opening day, shepherding Nick Dundee and then Teetotum Mill to

racing oblivion in the last two days, Williamson must feel like the emotional equivalent of the heavyweight's punch bag. Even by the Festival's turbulent standards, the Irishman's buffeting this week has been intense.

With luck, Nick Dundee and Teetotum Mill will survive to enjoy worthy and untroubled retirements. Perhaps they will defy medical law and race again. But their pretensions to greatness remain tantalisingly unfulfilled. The same, I suspect, will not be said of Miss V in a year or two.

"It's a great day and we're really chuffed. He's in absolutely everything - the National, Irish National, you name it," David Nicholson, trainer of Go Ballistic.

"I'm delighted for the horse more than anything. He deserved this and he didn't know he was a 66-1 shot," Sheila Lockhart, owner of Go Ballistic. "Richard said that the horse might not have been as supple over one or two fences as he has been in the past and that used up a lot of his energy. He's a young horse and, as we've set out to come here for the next couple of years, hopefully he'll be good enough. Today was tremendous experience for him. It's the first time he's really come under pressure in a race," Willie Mullins, trainer of Florida Pearl.

"He broke a blood vessel," Tony McCoy, rider of Unsinkable Boxer.

"It was a great run and on that he must be a serious Grand National prospect," Adrian Maguire, rider of Addington Boy. "If he could breathe properly he'd win a Gold Cup. I had a lot of horse under me until he made a mistake at the top of the hill. After that he couldn't breathe, but he gave everything. He's so brave. He was given oxygen afterwards," Lorcan Wyer, rider of Simply Dashing.

"He was wrong in himself and hopefully something will show up," Richard Johnson, rider of Escartefigue.

"His jumping was just not great," Paul Corberry, rider of Droms Fride.

"He just wasn't good enough on the day," Carl Llewellyn, rider of Senior El Beiruti.

"He jumped as if the track was too sharp for him," Graham Bradley, rider of Sun Bay.

Fitzgerald's skill speaks volumes

AT 3.50 YESTERDAY afternoon, there were more cameras, microphones and reporters crowded around Mick Fitzgerald than even he could handle. Well, almost. "I'm sorry, but I've got to go and get ready for the next race," he said, as one last radio crew tried his luck. Fitzgerald walked three paces towards the weighing room - and then stopped to do another interview.

Not for nothing is he one of the racing media's favourite jockeys. Fitzgerald not only talks, he talks unusually well, almost as well in fact, as he rides racehorses. Until this week, he had ridden just two Festival winners, and the most recent of these was in 1995. In the space of three days, though, he has added four more, three of them in championship events, and

marked himself out, a little like Walter Swinburn once did on the Flat as the man to have on your side in the big races.

Yet just a few years ago, he was so disappointed by the progress of his career that he was about to try his luck in New Zealand instead. It would have been a serious loss to the punters who collected this week after copybook rides in the Queen Mother Champion Chase, Triumph Hurdle and Gold Cup.

All three were presented to win their races with split-second precision. Fitzgerald's success on even the tongue-in-cheek nickname of "the bank robber", because he seemed to hold everything up, but while he may not have the front as often as Tony McCoy, he has the breadth of ability to do so when

The rider of See More Business delivers words and winners with equal rapidity. By Greg Wood

required. And anyway, his preferred style seems to be working rather well just now.

Fitzgerald has now won two of jump racing's three great prizes, with only the Champion Hurdle left to add to the Gold Cup and the Grand National, which he won on Rough Quest in 1996. It was in the aftermath of that victory that he produced what will probably remain his most famous sound bite, when he said that "sex is an anticlimax after that". It was a spur-of-the-moment remark, and one which he now admits he regrets. These days, he tries to think a little harder before

he speaks, though there is thankfully little sign of his speaking any less.

Even jockeys of the quality of Peter Scudamore and John Francome did not complete the Big Three, and Fitzgerald's last could be a long one. Then again, it could be just 12 months, given the immense authority of Katarino's success in the Triumph Hurdle yesterday.

The record of Triumph winners in the Champion is not encouraging, but Katarino, thanks in part to his jockey, did not seem to have the grudging experience of Cheltenham

which so often seems to leave its mark on winners of the race. Fitzgerald was pushing as they came down the hill, but by the time he reached the final flight, Katarino was travelling beautifully, and he quickened clear to win by nine lengths. Coral were so impressed that they offered just 10-1 for next year's Champion Hurdle, although Ladbrokes were more realistic with a quote of 20-1. The latter make it a habit to take his third hurdling crown next year, with those other Festival winners Hors La Loi on 7-1 and Barton on 10-1.

Fitzgerald dominated the final day of the Festival, ending it with a treble and the London Clubs Trophy for the meeting's leading jockey to put in the back of the car. The only worthwhile prize that escaped him yesterday

was the Stayers' Hurdle, which fell to the withering late run of Anzani, a 40-1 shot. Le Coureur, another of Ireland's strong team, seemed to have the race won at the bottom of the hill, but even Charlie Swan's sternest efforts could not repel Richard Johnson as he recorded his first ever Festival winner.

The afternoon, though, belonged to the talkative jockey from Cork, whose most telling comment came as he finally broke free of the media scrum to change his silks. "I feel greedy," he said, "but I still want more."

GO BALLISTIC's chances of winning the Grand National have been enhanced by news that Sun Bay, pulled up in the Gold Cup yesterday, will still go to Aintree. Simon Sherwood, his trainer, said yesterday: "Sun Bay is perfectly all right, he simply couldn't go the pace. All being well, he will go to Aintree." Sun Bay has lost 13th in the National. If he runs the weights will be held down and Go Ballistic - now 10-1 favourite for the National with Ladbrokes after his starting performance yesterday - will be able to run off 10st 13lb. This means he will have to concede just 5lb to Double Thriller who finished 31 lengths behind him in fourth place in the Gold Cup. Ask Tuz, who came back after finishing last of 11 finishers in the Queen Mother

BY IAN DAVIES

Champion Chase on Wednesday, has been retired. "He'll go to Brian Stewart Brown, his owner, to enjoy his retirement in the company of Large Animal and Arctic Call," his trainer, Tom Tate, said. Ask Tuz, won eight of his 19 races, notably the Tingle Creek Chase at Sandown in 1997.

A Tote Jackpot carry over of £295,473 goes to Fakenham today after only one 10p winner scooped a share of yesterday's fund, landing £23,999. The Tote also announced a record on-course turnover for the three days at Cheltenham this year. A total of £2,169,769 represented an increase of 11 per cent. GRAND NATIONAL (Aintree, to April 12): 1-1 Go Ballistic, 2-1 Double Thriller, 3-1 Ask Tuz, 4-1 Sun Bay, 5-1 Ask Tuz, 6-1 Sun Bay, 7-1 Ask Tuz, 8-1 Sun Bay, 9-1 Ask Tuz, 10-1 Sun Bay, 11-1 Ask Tuz, 12-1 Sun Bay, 13-1 Ask Tuz, 14-1 Sun Bay, 15-1 Ask Tuz, 16-1 Sun Bay, 17-1 Ask Tuz, 18-1 Sun Bay, 19-1 Ask Tuz, 20-1 Ask Tuz.

FAKENHAM

HYPERION	3.50 Antiquan Flyer
2.20 Conna's Croft	4.20 Mr Dick
2.50 Storming Lady (nb)	4.50 TANGSHAN (nap)
3.20 Yankie Lord	

GOING: Good (Good to Soft in places)
 ■ Let-hand, 1000 yards, 1000 yards.
 ■ Course: A 5 of town off B146. ADMISSION: Members £12; Grandstand & Paddock £2; Under 16s CAR PARK: Members £7 (23 for evening meetings), rest free.
 ■ LEADING TRAINERS: Mr G. Haines 8-29 (200%), G. Brennan 8-33 (242%), G. Proctor 6-9 (51%), J. Jenkins 6-39 (54%).
 ■ LEADING JOCKEYS: M. Brennan 8-42 (15%), R. Dunwoody 5-5 (33%), Michael Brennan 5-21 (33%), P. McKeown 5-21 (33%).
 ■ FAVORITES: B1 was from 2nd race (success rate 38%).
 ■ BLUNDERED FIRST TIME: None.

2.20 FAKENHAM CAR CENTRE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS 6) £2,500 added 2m Penalty Value £1,815
1. 430 THE GREAT FLOOD (10) (G) (W) House Range C Daye 8 10 0 J. McNeil (7)
2. 5045 AMONG ISLANDS (8) (D) (A) Hughes G Charles-Jones 8 11 0 J. Cooper (7)
3. 5421 COURT JONES (14) (A) Alexander H Alexander 8 11 0 M. R. Forrest (5)
4. 2144 BLUETOY (12) (D) (R) Forrest G Gledhill 7 11 0 D. Gledhill (5)
5. 2525 LUCY TUFFY (13) (G) Proctor G Proctor 8 11 0 Michael Brennan (5)
6. 3750 ADJAR (11) (D) (L) Langan M S Langan 8 11 0 J. Forrest (5)
7. 4220 CONNA'S CROFT (10) (G) Haines 8 11 0 J. Haines (5)
8. 4220 CONNA'S CROFT (10) (G) Haines 8 11 0 J. Haines (5)
9. 4220 CONNA'S CROFT (10) (G) Haines 8 11 0 J. Haines (5)
10. 4220 CONNA'S CROFT (10) (G) Haines 8 11 0 J. Haines (5)

THE GREAT FLOOD: Lightly raced since landing Cheltenham claim in 1996, but showed he returns some ability when close to the edge of the track in non-seller over C&D last time. Conna's Croft: Much improved in recent outings on the all-weather. Among Islands: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Lucy Tuffy: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Adjar: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Conna's Croft: Much improved in recent outings on the all-weather. Among Islands: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Lucy Tuffy: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Adjar: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Conna's Croft: Much improved in recent outings on the all-weather. Among Islands: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Lucy Tuffy: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Adjar: Good effort in recent outings on the all-weather. Conna's Croft: Much improved in recent outings on the all-weather. 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SPORT

CASTAGNEDE IS KICKING HIMSELF P22 • MANDELA TEMPTS LEWIS P25

Keegan gives Sutton his chance



Kevin Keegan arrives to announce his team

KEVIN KEEGAN sprang a surprise when he unveiled his first England squad yesterday: he named a balanced party with nine defenders and only six forwards.

One of those was Chris Sutton, whose inclusion, after just one match back for Blackburn, was perhaps the biggest shock. Though Tim Sherwood could not have expected his first call-up. He is one of two uncapped players in the 24-man selection for tomorrow week's European Championship qualifier with Poland at Wembley, the other being Ray Parlour.

In all there are six changes from the last squad, picked by Glenn Hoddle and named by Howard Wilkinson, which faced France last month. Phil Neville, David Batty and Steve McNamman are also recalled while

BY GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

Dion Dublin, Paul Merson, Nicky Butt, Paul Ince, Kieron Dyer and Richard Wright drop out. Ince is suspended, Dyer injured, Butt has not recovered his place since injury while Dublin and Merson have not regained form. Wright reverts to the Under-21s as Keegan has opted for two goalkeepers with Ian Walker on standby.

Few would argue with the broad make-up of the squad. As Keegan said: "There are only around 50 potential England players, some of those are too old or have had a chance, some are on the verge of playing but not ready, some are not involved with their clubs for various reasons - like Rob Lee, some are suspended and some are injured. It

ENGLAND SQUAD V POLAND		
Seaman (Arsenal)	Le Tissier (Chelsea)	Anderson (Tottenham)
Stanger (Leeds Utd)	Blackburn (Sheff Wed)	Stanger (Blackburn)
Adams (Ipswich)	Southern (Aston Villa)	Redknapp (Liverpool)
Campbell (Tottenham)	Parlour (Arsenal)	Cole (Manchester Utd)
Forrest (West Ham)	Scholes (Manchester Utd)	Shearer (Newcastle Utd)
Keane (Aston)	Blackburn (Sheff Wed)	Owen (Liverpool)
G. Smith (Manchester Utd)	Therby (Leeds Utd)	Fowler (Liverpool)
P. Healy (Manchester Utd)	McManaman (Liverpool)	Sutton (Blackburn)

comes down to about 32 players of which I've chosen 24."

A fair point, but there are inconsistencies. McNamman, for example, is even less involved with Liverpool than Lee is at Newcastle, yet he was chosen. This may have something to do with the dearth of players able to play on the left flank, but it is also because Keegan, because of his Fulham commitments, is having to back hunches.

He admitted he had only been able to watch one Premiership match in the flesh,

Liverpool's match at Derby last week. Fourteen of the 22 players and all 10 substitutes were foreign. McNamman, the reason for the visit, was omitted. The only beneficiary appears to be the promising Steven Gerrard, of Liverpool, who will join the squad, along with Jonathon Woodgate, of Leeds, for experience.

McManaman was still chosen, perhaps because Keegan can empathise with the problems created by his decision to join Real Madrid in the summer.

"I know how he feels, I have been through the same situation myself, [when he was leaving Liverpool for Hamburg in 1977]. It's not for me to get involved with the politics but if he played he might feel he has something to prove. He's not a player who needs a lot of training to be fit, and I would have no quibbles about his fitness if he was selected to play." The same applied, he said, to Batty.

Fitness, he conceded, "is a slight worry" where Sutton was concerned but the Blackburn striker is unlikely to start the match. Keegan admitted his reaction when Sutton rejected the chance to play for the B team last spring was "Why?" but he added: "Everybody deserves a second chance. I walked out on Don Revie [after he was omitted from a match

against Wales in 1975] so I can't criticise too much. Sometimes you do things under pressure which you can't understand yourself. Maybe he'll tell me why when we meet up."

Sutton will not be the only player doing some explaining. The FA has not yet had a chance to conduct the hearing into Graeme Le Saux and Robbie Fowler's spat at Stamford Bridge so Keegan intends to shut them in a room with him when the squad meets on Sunday night "and have 15 minutes with them repairing the damage. This is not the FA's idea, it is mine. They are part of an England squad together and the last thing we need is friction between players."

Of the new players, Keegan, who conducted an impeccable press conference, said: "Sher-

wood gives me options, he's playing as well as he's ever played and is unlikely not to be capped before. Parlour, I would have taken him to the World Cup. I don't know what else he had to do, he was and is playing with some outstanding players and some weeks is the best on the park."

Paul Gascoigne, on the other hand, "has not had the chance to prove his fitness," said Keegan, adding: "The door is still open to him - he can win games." Dublin, Merson and Les Ferdinand also received a mention in dispatches.

Keegan added: "We need to win all three of the European Championship games [under his caretaker reign]. That's not bravado, you just have to look at the table to know that. But we are capable of doing it."

Reed reports Ginola over celebration

DAVID GINOLA may have lit up the FA Cup on Tuesday with his superb winner for Tottenham at Barnsley, but the referee Mike Reed was unimpressed by his subsequent display of chest-baring (or vest-baring, in fact), and has reported him to the Football Association for "over-elaborate goal celebrations".

The Frenchman reacted to his strike - a contender for goal of the season - by running to the Spurs fans, taking his shirt off and throwing it to the crowd.

The controversial Reed said: "This sort of thing can be dangerous if people start to surge forward. The police have constantly told us to keep the players on the pitch when they are celebrating goals. I realise it was a brilliant goal but we are under instructions to report anything we feel is over the top."

David Platt, Tottenham's director of football, was unimpressed. "Maybe Mr Reed should have noted that David was celebrating in front of his own fans. He didn't drop his shorts, he didn't show his backside, the shirt was thrown back to him and the game restarted at the time it should have done.

Maybe Mr Reed wished he had scored the goal."

Despite the unfavourable report, Ginola is unlikely to be punished. FA sources yesterday indicated that the worst he can expect is a letter reminding him of the potential hazards of over-enthusiastic revelry.

Well used to producing the unexpected on the pitch, Ginola did much the same off it yesterday when he said he would model himself on George Graham if he becomes a manager.

"If I became a manager then I would follow George Graham's philosophy of football," he said. "The best managers in the world know that the idea [of football] is to build the team from the defence. I remember when I played in Paris for PSG that we got a lot of criticism because we didn't score many goals. But at the end of the season we won the title."

"If you keep a clean sheet then there is always the possibility of you scoring one goal and winning. So I would build from the back and have players like myself up front - that would be very nice."

More football, pages 27, 28

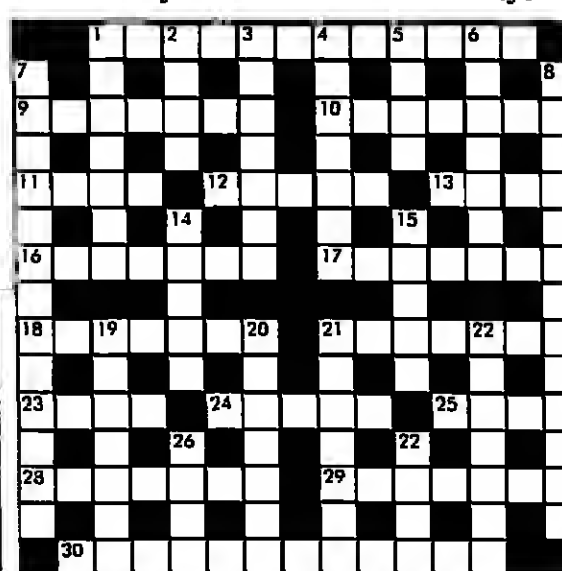


Mick Fitzgerald aboard See More Business (left) jump the last fence alongside Tony Dobbin on Go Ballistic in yesterday's Gold Cup at Cheltenham David Jones/PA

THE FRIDAY CROSSWORD

No. 3874 Friday 19 March

by Phi



Thursday's solution
ACROSS
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- ACROSS
- 1 Its delivery marks an earlier delivery (8,4)
 - 2 Intend to block up opening in clothing (7)
 - 3 Doctor very involved in genuine amputation? (7)
 - 4 & 12 Ravens wildly after bad behaviour? The other way round (4,5)
 - 5 Group of countries with veto, according to report (4)
 - 6 A useful purchase for the mountaineer? (7)
 - 7 A ship after unloading? (7)
 - 8 With cleverness and cunning capturing the market (7)
 - 9 Quaking, one's surrounded by half a hundred (7)

- DOWN
- 1 With flair, cook cut soft loaf (7)
 - 2 Type of knot working free (4)
 - 3 Rash person had to strangle someone else, almost (7)
 - 4 See water rising - run

Business usurps the pretenders

WE DID NOT get the result expected in the Cheltenham Gold Cup yesterday. We got justice instead.

Florida Pearl, Teeton Mill and Double Thriller, the supposed new monarchs of steeplechasing, were scorched in National Hunt's fiercest of arenas. Victory went instead to a horse who has already been burned in this contest and it was a result that showed there are betting shops in the heavens.

See More Business was second favourite for the Blue Riband when he was pushed off the track by another horse 12 months ago. Vindication does not usually come as true as this.

"You're never owed anything in this game, but winning this certainly makes up for everything," Paul Nicholls, the winning trainer, said. "We've cracked it."

While See More Business was outstanding in the athletic battle, he was not omnipotent in the catwalk of the parade ring. The languid Florida Pearl, Escartefigue and the frightening dimensions of Double Thriller stood out. If these three had been strapped to a rival chariot of then Ben Hur would have finished runner-up in the coliseum.

Go Ballistic and See More Business were dwarfed and the loose, black material around the latter's face looked like something you might see flapping on grandma's washing line. Binkers, though, have been the making of See More Business.

Just two weeks ago he began schooling in the headgear and the impact was staggering. Previous vaulting clumsiness was

RACING

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON
at Cheltenham

immediately eradicated. "It was like riding a completely different horse," Mick Fitzgerald, the jockey, reported.

This was a newly polished skill that stood the nine-year-old in good stead in the opening exchanges yesterday as Senior El Bebruti and Dorans Pride blasted away from the front.

The first victim was a hugely significant one. Teeton Mill, the grey who has swept through all ranks this season, slipped a tendon off a hock and was pulled

GOLD CUP

- 1 SEE MORE BUSINESS
- 2 GO BALLISTIC
- 3 FLORIDA PEARL

up before the ninth fence. He is unlikely to race again.

The pounding tempo continued with Double Thriller as the conductor. See More Business scooted along pleasingly close to the pace, while the most ominous of shadows belonged to Florida Pearl. At the high point of the course he looked the winner. "Richard [Dunwoody] said the horse came alive at the top of the hill, but then he used what he had in the tank to get to the other two," Willie Mullins, the trainer, said. By now, the other two comprised See More Business and Go Ballistic. 16-1 and 66-1 shots spoiling the dreams of punters and purists. The ne-

gotiation of the final fence decided it. "I needed a long one at the last and I thought to myself: 'You're either coming up or going down, it's one or the other,'" Fitzgerald said. "He got it right." At the line, a length was the division.

It was a day of three victories for Fitzgerald, three sports of the high pleasure a Festival winner injects. "If anybody had seen me driving home after the County Hurdle two years ago, when I chose the wrong horse and Barria Boy won, they would know what the Festival does for me," he said. "I broke every speed record there was that night. I was not a happy man. I was in such a temper that I had to take my wedding ring off as it was cutting into my finger. That's what Cheltenham means to me. And when I got beaten on Rough Quest in the 1996 Gold Cup [behind Imperial Call] I was gutted. I wanted to feel what Conor O'Dwyer felt. But I felt it today and it's something that won't go away for a long, long time."

Paul Nicholls, too, has had bad days in the Cotswolds and his victories at this year's meeting have been long overdue. "I supposed I did begin to wonder if I would ever have a winner here. But that's behind me."

And Paul Barber, joint owner of See More Business, will now have to set different goals. It is his ambition to establish a 1,000-strong dairy herd in the West country and win a Cheltenham Gold Cup. Milking cows and milking applause, he's now done it all.

Racing, pages 24, 25

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FRIDAY REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION



A spate of savage killings has shocked Jamaica. The 29 victims are all elderly, returning from Britain and America to the rural idylls they remember from their childhoods. But times have changed and they're not welcome anymore...

Paradise Lost

They found Alfred Morris lying dead in a pool of blood on the lawn of his mansion. The fingers of his left hand were defiantly clasped around the keys to his English-made Ford Sierra. The one-time Birmingham shopkeeper had been beaten around the head with a blunt instrument and stabbed three times in the stomach. Pathologists who examined his body believe he clung to life for some time after his attackers had abandoned the scene. But there was no one to hear his cries for help.

Mr Morris, who died last October at the age of 70, became one of the many victims of ruthless gangs preying on the elderly "foreigners" who retire to Jamaica anticipating that their savings will allow them to live their last years in grand style in the warmth of the Caribbean sun. Instead they have provided easy pickings for bandits staffing the Jamaican countryside.

Although he never felt completely at home in the industrialised West Midlands, Mr Morris was well-known and highly popular among Caribbean immigrants of his own generation, many of whom he had sheltered when they first arrived in the area from the West Indies. He had moved to Britain at the age of 21 and, after giving up a labouring job in a cable factory, he drew on his Caribbean upbringing to set up in business selling yams, green bananas and desheers from the back of his motorcycle. He progressed to a mobile shop before setting up a Caribbean food store that was to become a focal point for his community but was equally popular with Asian customers in the inner-city Birmingham district of Balsall Heath. Though he was an astute and successful businessman, Mr Morris won the gratitude of his poorer clientele by his willingness to offer food "on the knock".

When he arrived back in Jamaica, he set up home in the coastal district of St Ann's, near the white sandy beaches where Christopher Columbus came on shore when he arrived on the island in 1494. But the quiet seaside village that he had known as a boy had changed dramatically. Now St Ann's was a bustling town that drew people from far and wide, anxious to make money from the new tourist trade.

The friends and relatives whom Mr Morris had known as a child were now long gone, and the

environment was much more hostile. While he built his dream home on the edge of the lush Jamaican interior he cultivated vegetables and tried to recreate the relationships he had enjoyed in Birmingham by giving produce to local families.

A week before Mr Morris's murder, the decomposed body of Vincent "Pie" Palmer was discovered on his farm in the rural parish of St Thomas. Mr Palmer, 68, who had recently returned to Jamaica from London, was shot once in his abdomen and three times in the back. His killers have not been traced. Then on 4 January, Nigel Johnson, a Londoner who was staying with relatives in the parish of St Catherine, was shot dead by gunmen who burst into the house shortly after two o'clock in the morning. The 36-year-old, the youngest "returnee" to die, was robbed of £700 in cash and jewellery. Again, the killers have not been caught. Mr Johnson was the ninth returnee to die since the beginning of last year.

In November, a 58-year-old man from Tottenham, north London, who had set up a business in the central Jamaican town of May Pen, Clarendon, was chopped to death with machetes

after intruders broke into his house in nearby Mandeville. His killers, too, are still at large. Two days before Christmas, a minibus carrying six returnees from the United States between Norman Manley Airport in Kingston and their hotel was hijacked by 10 men carrying high-powered rifles. They were subjected to a terrifying ordeal before being robbed of about £10,000.

Meanwhile, relatives of Robert "Scottie" Graham and his sister Icylyn, two Londoners who went missing on 27 November 1997, have put up more than £15,000 as a reward for information of their whereabouts. The couple, who were living in the capital, Kingston, have not been seen since they went to meet a prospective buyer for a van they had advertised for sale. The vehicle was found abandoned in sugar-cane fields near the Caymanas Park racecourse, and the Grahams are feared to be dead.

It is a disturbing pattern that is causing great concern to the Jamaican authorities. In the past six years, 29 people who left Jamaica to make

a life for themselves in England and the Americas have been brutally murdered on returning here. At the beginning of this year the senate, Jamaica's upper house of parliament, passed a resolution calling on the government to provide better advice to returnees on investment opportunities and personal security.

Most of the victims have been British or American. In almost all cases they had been born in Jamaica and were realising dreams of returning home to what they nostalgically remembered as an island paradise of rural peace and clear blue skies. But the village life that they had abandoned 40 years or more ago has changed beyond recognition.

By choosing to return to the villages of their childhood they eschew the high security and armed guards which patrol the homes of the Jamaican elite in uptown Kingston. And with few friends and relatives in an environment which they left two generations earlier, they are isolated and vulnerable.

Many of the 40,000 people who have returned to Jamaica over the past five years are pensioners who still receive benefits from

England and contribute about £15m to the island's economy each year. Most are from the group of people who came to England in the Fifties and Sixties, on board or following the SS *Empire Windrush*, to work mainly on the buses, in hospitals and in factories. Others are returning from Canada and the US. Of the 29 returnee murders in Jamaica over the past six years, nine have been committed since the beginning of last year.

Percy LaTouche, founder of the Association for the Resettlement of Returning Residents, strongly believes that returnees are being targeted. A returnee himself, who used to live in Birmingham, he says: "I don't know if it is because they have big houses or they talk too much about what they have, but they are definitely being singled out."

"I am not saying people can't have big houses and expensive cars, but when you have these things people get jealous, especially in a place like Jamaica, which has high levels of poverty."

Some returnees give themselves away. They are making themselves out to be criminals.

Luke Douglas, the municipal reporter on the *Jamaican Gleaner* newspaper, says returnees would be best advised to move into affluent areas where they can get better protection, rather than live in the rural communities where they originally came from. "The fact that you are a returnee means that you would not know many people, so there are no gunmen or police to protect you and the criminals see you as an easy target. It is very sad," he says.

Such advice comes too late for Alfred Morris, and back in Birmingham his relatives are left to grieve for the gentle man they knew as "Sabboo". His former wife, Dorothy Morris, 56, says: "Sabboo has never done anything to anyone. He was actively involved with the community. When he returned from the fields, he used to call the kids and give them food. How can they kill the goose that laid the golden egg?"

She recalled a man who came to Britain in 1950 with a sense of hope and adventure, setting up a shop in Birmingham which sold Caribbean produce to a clientele which came from as far afield as Cardiff and Manchester. So successful was he that he amassed sufficient savings to buy a piece of land in Jamaica, close to the sandy beaches of St Ann's where he used to play as a child. He built a seven-bedroom English-style house that was to prove his undoing.

To his brother, Caral, his death was a shock but hardly a surprise. Caral, 68, had himself retired to Jamaica only to return to England four years ago after a frightening attack that nearly cost the life of his young son. While he was out, three gunmen burst into his house in the coastal town of Ocho Rios, tied up his half-naked wife and threw his then two-year-old son Charick, now six, against a wall to stop him crying. The boy's skull was split, leaving him with head injuries from which he has still not recovered.

"As smart as my brother was," says Caral, "he underestimated the Jamaica he left behind. The aggression that we face out there is unbelievable. They are more likely to kill you if you are a returnee, than if you are a local. If they go to rob a bank, they will only kill if it is necessary, but with us they don't care. They could have robbed my brother and not killed him. In Jamaica they don't need any excuse to take your life."

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EU under scrutiny

Sir: Much of the reporting of the European Commission's resignation has misinterpreted the role commissioners are supposed to play. According to the "founding fathers" of the 1950s, commissioners were never meant to be ministers or departmental heads, in a system of "line management". Commissioners are members of a "college" and are collectively responsible, rather than individually so. It is appropriate, therefore, that they resigned en bloc.

What we have here is a clash between two organisational cultures: the model of the 1950s confronting the new demands of the 1990s. Tony Blair is right to demand a root-and-branch reform of the Commission, but his five-point plan does not go far enough. Steve Richards is correct (Comment, 17 March) to argue that the momentum is with far-reaching reform.

It is not simply a matter of imposing new financial systems on the Commission: the entire model has to be changed. This means reform of the Commission's organisational structures, its staffing and promotional policies, and the process whereby its heads are selected. Out with the institutional philosophy of Jean Monnet and in with new management values and practices. Professor KEVIN FEATHERSTONE
Department of European Studies
University of Bradford

Sir: As long as the European Commission struggles with its dual function of executive and administration, as long as the European Parliament has restricted control over it, and as long as the appointments of its President and commissioners are the subject of horse trading between member-state governments, the prospect of malpractices will remain, and the EU will lack credibility in the eyes of the citizens it serves.

If, however, the Commission were to be selected by the Parliament – the only body with a democratic mandate at EU level – the lines of accountability would be strengthened and the commissioners answerable, through the Parliament, to us, the citizens of the EU.

The Parliament's bombshell may, in fact, have been the best thing that could happen to the Commission. Setting in motion the democratisation of the EU, along with other reforms, should finally persuade people that the EU is relevant to ordinary citizens. ROSALIND GILL
Oxford

Sir: The European Commission official who blew the whistle on cronyism and fraud in Brussels says, "I have been very lonely and I still am not certain about what is going to happen to me". "Ignominious way for them to be sacked", 17 March. Now that his concerns have been fully vindicated, is there any good reason why he should remain suspended?

As Mr van Buitenen himself has said, if the UK's Public Interest Disclosure Act – which is due to come into force here this May – had applied to him, he would have been fully protected against victimisation. More importantly, the law would have helped ensure that the Commission dealt with his concerns properly in the first place.

If the new Commission is to signal a break with the past, it must reinstate Mr van Buitenen and introduce whistleblower protection for those countless officials less brave than him. GUY DEHN
Director
Public Concern at Work
London EC1

Sir: At the press conference on 16 March, Jacques Santer said: "Je constate avec beaucoup de satisfaction que je suis entièrement blanchi." This means that he considered that he had been "completely cleared" by the report, and not that he considered



Cuba No 5: Young schoolchildren at Trinidad de la Cuba

Michael MacSweeney

himself to be "whiter than white".

Mr Santer's reaction to the report might be considered ill-judged. However, the expression "whiter than white", seized upon for its newsworthiness by The Independent, BBC TV news and Channel 4 news among others, served to portray him in an exaggeratedly negative light. Dr CHRIS DAWSON
Lecturer in French
Manchester Metropolitan University

Sir: The resignation of the EU Commissioners and the complaint, earlier in the week, by a butcher that after 20 years he would have to give up his business because of unnecessary and expensive alterations he would have to carry out at the behest of the EU would seem to have only a tenuous connection. I think otherwise.

If we have incompetence, dishonesty and nepotism at the top of the pyramid you can be sure that there exists further down a bureaucracy intent on empire building and endeavouring to justify its position by the issuing of fatuous regulations. We now have a heaven-sent opportunity to purge this bloated organisation. P BRYAN
St Helier,
Jersey

Sir: I find the current debate engulfing the European Commission ironic in the extreme. Over the past five years I have carried out advisory work for agencies of the European Union and their procedures to stop me defrauding them were ludicrous in their extent.

For example, in order to claim back the cost of an air fare I had to produce a receipted invoice, the ticket counterfoil and the various boarding cards. Without any of these I would not have been reimbursed. Perhaps they should apply some of these provisions to the commissioners, who appear to need them more than I do. JOHN CHARMAN
London SE1

Protecting children

Sir: In mid-November I witnessed a neighbour punching his eight-year-old stepson in the street ("I'm sorry but your children are not your own private property", 16 March).

I remonstrated with him and later phoned the NSPCC child helpline.

Four weeks later I was telephoned by the social services and asked to make a formal statement and act as a witness in any future prosecution. I was asked to contact the child protection unit of the police and was interviewed by a police officer.

Some weeks later I rang the police to ask if I would be needed as a witness, to be told that, because of the delay between my reporting the assault and the police's involvement, they would not be able to pursue the case as there would be no physical evidence.

The case was returned to social services and shortly after they visited the family.

Within days of the visit, the tyres on my car were slashed. A month later they were slashed again, and last week my car was vandalised. I am not suggesting that social services leaked my name but rather the family made the connection between their visit and

my having challenged the father.

Other neighbours who have witnessed the children being assaulted are now even less likely to come forward to give evidence.

Having suffered hundreds of pounds worth of damage to my property I hope that, if faced with a similar situation, I would act in the same way – but I do know that I would think twice about it. NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

Sir: The NSPCC knows from dealing with people who come for help – and our own experience as parents – that the world is not divided into good and bad people ("Who cares about children?", 17 March).

The Fullstop campaign is not about the good driving out the bad.

It is about awareness and self-awareness: enabling action, creating an infrastructure and services for people concerned about cruelty to children, providing help and support which they can trust.

Above all, it is about changing attitudes so that cruelty to children becomes absolutely intolerable.

Because the world is not divided into good and bad we know that there are no simple solutions and this will not be easy. But we are

determined to create the will in this country, together, to try.

PHILLIP NOYES
Director of Public Policy
NSPCC
London EC2

Silk scroll's journey

Sir: You refer ("Museum is charging hidden fees", 11 March) to a 14th-century Chinese scroll painting on silk at the British Museum.

Since this painting was acquired through the generosity of the National Art Collections Fund, after the Heritage Lottery Fund turned down an application, your readers may be interested to learn why this work is of outstanding national interest.

As the one who first recognised, dated, identified and published the painting (with a full-size facsimile reproduction), and who urged its acquisition by the British Museum, I am most grateful to the National Art Collections Fund.

It is a little more than 20 years since the scroll was brought to me for opinion by its owner, the late Philip Robinson. Not only did its style, title, calligraphy and other inscriptions tally perfectly with the signature and date, 1321, of an otherwise unknown master, the mounting bore the signature of its

first English owner, W Butler, and the date, 1797. Two centuries ago, this was almost certainly the very first Chinese painting of note and distinction to come to this country.

There is no clue as to how the scroll came to this country, but a section of the published reproduction is exhibited in the Palace Museum in the Forbidden City, Beijing, with the suggestion that it could have been given to Lord Macartney, whose embassy to the Chinese Emperor journeyed to Peking in 1792 to 1793.

The subject is well matched to the vicissitudes of its history: a single toad, a lizard and all kinds of insects prey on each other amid plants and flowers of stunning beauty, in veiled reference to the political disorder of the time.

Paintings of this calibre are rare even in China, and of this particular style almost non-existent. RODERICK WHITFIELD
Personal David Professor of Chinese Art
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London

Female roles

Sir: To describe the term "actress" as "time-honoured" (Letter, 17 March) seems odd.

There was certainly nothing honourable about the term at the end of the 17th century. Women had only recently won the legal right to appear on the stage, and the male actors previously specialising in female roles who were thus put out of work soon saw to it that the word "actress" should become synonymous with whore, amoral female, rapacious seductress: a tradition continued by some sections of the press to include bimbo, striptease artist and show-girl.

If female actors disdain a word which implies that their job description includes such services it does not seem at all bizarre to me but, rather, long over-due. MOLLY BARRELL
Ilminster, Somerset

Ulster guns must go

Sir: As a solicitor from Northern Ireland now working in London, I view the murder of Rosemary Nelson with the utmost revulsion.

Mrs Nelson, like many solicitors in the province, defended clients from both communities. Her crime in the eyes of her murderers was to promote her own democratic and law-abiding brand of Irish nationalism through her work.

Unlike Frank Murphy (Letter, 17 March) I draw the conclusion that Mrs Nelson's death should only emphasise the need for a speedy beginning to the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. Only when the gun is removed from Ulster's political arena can individuals like Mrs Nelson promote their cause safe in the knowledge that their views will be regarded as part and parcel of life in a democracy.

Mr Murphy finds it "daft" that decommissioning should stop elected politicians taking part in the new Northern Ireland executive. Yet if democracy is to truly work, illegally held weapons must be removed. It is common knowledge within Unionist circles that even a token hand-over of weapons by Sinn Féin/IRA will allow First Minister Trimble to admit Messrs Adams and McGuinness into the Executive. PAUL G W ROBINSON
London SW15

Walking to school

Sir: John R E Bell is right to stress the risk that "parental choice" in education will lead to longer school journeys and hence reduce children's ability to walk or cycle to school (Letter, 18 March). But this problem should not be overstated.

From the mid-1970s, the average distance travelled to school by five- to 10-year-olds rose from 1.0 to 1.2 miles. The average school journey of 11- to 15-year-olds rose from 2.5 to 2.8 miles over the same period.

These trends are worrying but not disastrous. To increase walking and cycling to school, we need to tackle parental concerns over speeding traffic and "stranger danger".

We also need proper "joined-up thinking" in government to prevent education policy undermining attempts to promote sustainable school travel. Otherwise the nine-mile school journeys confronted by Mr Bell in Bishops Cleeve could become the norm, not the exception. BEN FLOWDEN
Director
The Pedestrians Association
London SW8

Frozen buildings

Sir: James Fisher's article "What's the story?" (Review, 15 March) leaves us with a concern that we are in danger of adopting a rather inflexible approach to modern building.

The essence of a "sustainable" Modern design should be that it has a robustness rendering it capable of a degree of adaptation, whilst maintaining its essential integrity. Yet the suggestion seems to be made that buildings such as Isokon and Koolhaas House must be preserved in their exactly original form, or they will be of no value.

I am sure it is possible to accept a degree of careful adaptation which brings them back into beneficial use. One of the worst things that you can do to a building is to leave it empty, let alone neglected.

If we are to list Modern buildings, then let us interpret that listing in a manner which allows them to adapt and evolve, at reasonable cost, treating them as places to live rather than as museums. MICHAEL GWILLIAM
Director, Civic Trust
London SW1

Bloodless massacre

Sir: You report that The Texas Chainsaw Massacre has been passed for viewing with no cuts (Report, 17 March). Won't he worth watching, will it? RICHARD WELSH
Denbigh, Clwyd

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!

"I WAS woken by the birds this morning," said the man at the bar. "Five o'clock. Bloody racket. Why can't they get up at a proper hour?" "They do," said the woman with the red hairdo, who used to drink orange juice when she had orange hair but has switched to red wine to match her new hair colour. "They get up with the sun, same as the rest of us should. In the old days everyone followed the natural pattern of days. Now only the birds do."

"At least they don't sing when they go to bed," said the man with the dog. "Can you imagine what a dusk chorus would be like?" "Bloody racket," said the man at the bar again. "I lay there listening to them and wondered why anyone ever described the noise as singing. Nothing much musical about it."

There was one bird who sounded like a mobile phone. In fact, it sounded so much like a mobile phone I got up to make sure it wasn't mine.

"And was it?" "Of course it wasn't, as I would have known if I hadn't been half asleep. You don't get mobile phones 20 feet up a tree, looking for mates."

"It might have been a starling," said the resident Welshman. "They're very good at imitating things. Maybe it's been living close to a mobile phone and liked the sound of it."

"There's no reason why it should be imitating anything," said the man with the dog. "Maybe it just sounds like a mobile phone naturally. Maybe this bird, whatever it is, has always sounded like

that, way before mobile phones were invented."

"Are you saying," I said, "that mobile phones imitate starlings?"

"No," said the man with the dog. "You might equally well say that a bird imitates a plane when it's flying. But it's quite possible that a bird might sound accidentally like a mobile phone."

"If that's true," said the man at the bar, "then nobody would have realised it before now. I mean, say all through the 1950s this bird was singing its heart out like a mobile phone – well, nobody would realise what it sounded like because mobile phones hadn't been invented, and there would be no record of it because nobody would describe it in those terms. Amazing thought."

"There might be a bird out there

right now which sounds like something that hasn't even been invented yet," said the red lady.



MILES KINGTON

'One bird sounded so much like a mobile phone I got up to make sure it wasn't mine'

"Such as?" said him at the bar. "How should I know?" she said. "It hasn't been invented yet." "Whatever it is, I bet it's that bloody bird which does one single high repeated note over and over again," said the man at the bar. "That drives me wild." "That's already been invented," she said. "It's called the sound of a lorry reversing, telling you to get out of the way."

"That would be tragic," said the lugubrious man who never spoke unless he had a macabre thought. "It would be tragic if you heard the bird, and thought it was a lorry, then jumped out of the way and got run over by a real lorry going forward."

"I wonder if people do any market research when they invent new noises?" said the man at the

bar, ignoring him. "I mean, when they have to devise a noise for a computer or a machine, are they careful to make sure it doesn't sound like the call of some well-known bird?"

"Would it matter if it did?" "It might do," said the lugubrious man again. "Imagine if there was a bird which sounded like the noise made by pedestrian crossings to tell blind people it's all right to cross."

"What would happen?" "They'd hear the bird, think it was all right to cross, step out into the road and get run over."

The lugubrious man smiled. It was, by his lights, a really cheerful thought.

"Of course," said the man at the bar, "if it is possible for a bird to sound like a mobile phone before

mobile phones were invented, it is also possible now for a bird to sound like something that has been discontinued."

"Come again," said the man with the dog, and I think he spoke for all of us.

"Well, there are certain inventions which have become outmoded. The steam engine. The spinning jenny. Old-fashioned cash tills which jangled. Typewriter bells. They all had their own sound. What if there is some bird somewhere which makes a sound exactly like one of those?"

"Tell me what a spinning jenny sounded like and I'll tell you if there's a bird which sounds like it," said the red lady.

There was no answer to that and by common assent we moved on to a completely different topic.

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Bring clarity to the world of charity in the 'Giving Age'

ONE OF the trees among the forest of small measures in Gordon Brown's Budget was a new tax break for charitable donations. It seemed a good idea; a sensible response to the decline in charitable giving in this country would be to make all donations to charity tax-deductible. Though the cause of the "philanthropy gap" between the United Kingdom and the United States lies deeper in our respective cultures, easier tax relief may shift Britain towards the "Giving Age" that the Prime Minister wants to see.

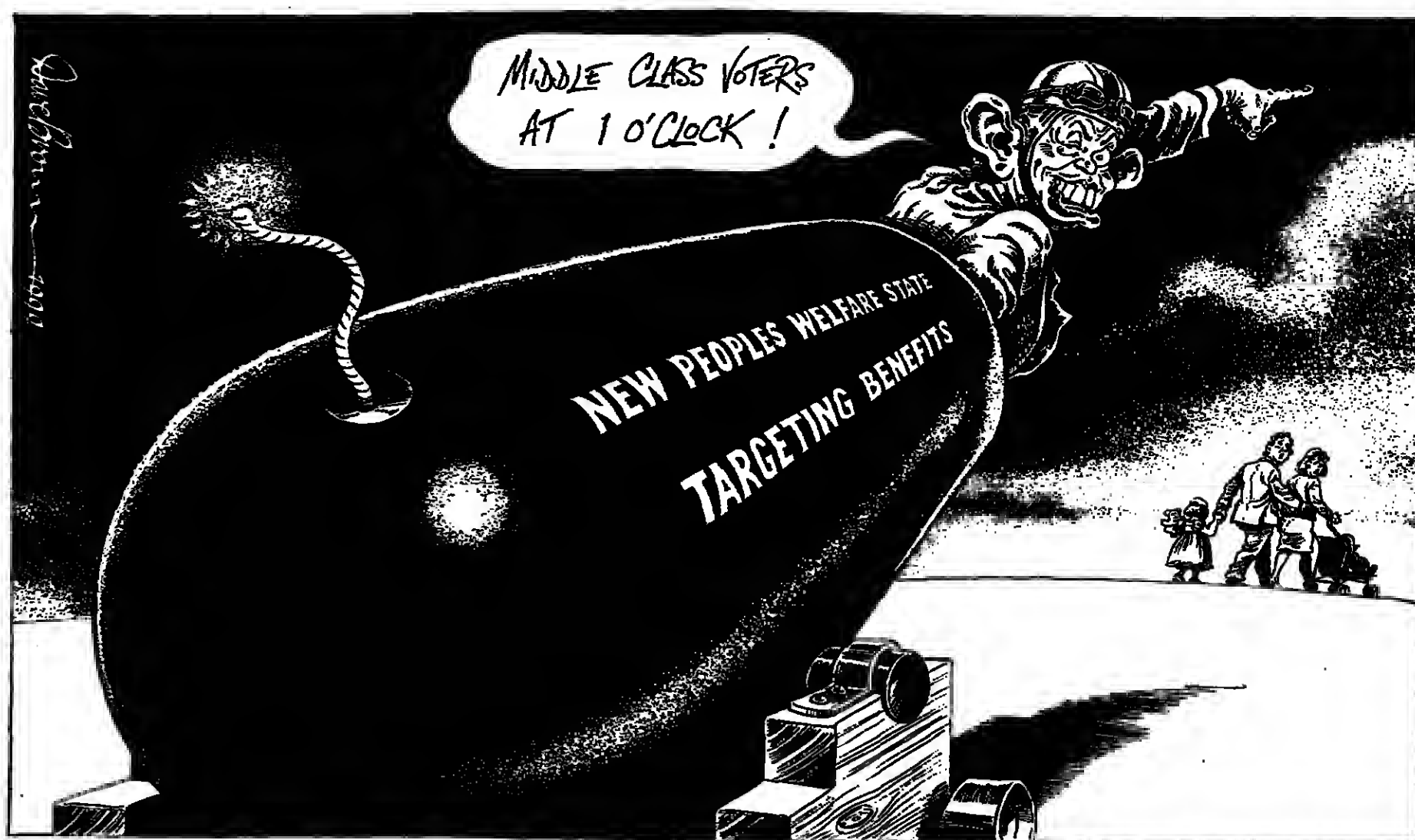
However, when the small print of the Budget is examined closely it turns out that the Government is moving in rather small, crab-like steps, albeit in the right direction. The new tax relief, given its full youth-showbiz launch by the surreal duo of the Chancellor and Eddie Izzard yesterday, can be claimed only for donations of more than £100 to anti-poverty and educational projects in the world's poorest countries. It is thus only a small addition to the tax relief available for regular charitable donations over four years, and through payroll deductions.

This is a shame, but there is a good reason for being so restrictive, which is that the present definition of a charity is hopelessly out of date. The four headings - relief of poverty, education, promotion of religion and community benefit - were set out by the courts in 1891. And it would be wrong, to say the least, for the Chancellor to give further tax privileges to donations to Elton College. This is where we hit the limits to New Labour's radicalism. Private education is a sensitive area, in which votes can be lost. So sensitive that not even a review of charitable status carried out at arm's length from the Government by the Charity Commission can be allowed to touch it.

The most straightforward course for a radical government would be to redefine charitable objects to exclude fee-paying schools and religion (churches should not be charitable, except for the good works that they do), and then to make all donations to charity free of tax. But even that would rouse a whole host of angry clerics and suspicious professional parents.

Instead, Tony Blair and Mr Brown are trying to do good by stealth. Yesterday the Charity Commission announced that relief of unemployment should be added to the list as an explicitly charitable purpose. At the same time it insisted that its review would not affect the long-standing recognition that advancement of education is charitable. Besides, it would require legislation to take away the existing privileges of private schools, and last November, when he was an education minister, Stephen Byers made it clear that the Government had no appetite for that.

Which is a pity. One solution is to give the Charity Commission more independence and more powers to "name and shame" the lazy charities that rely on sentiment and



tradition to build up huge reserves. With many similar charities operating in the same field, the commission could provide league tables so that donors can make informed decisions about where their money will be most effective.

Meanwhile, the existence of charity law means that the makers of our laws already determine that some ways of disposing of our disposable income are better than others. The existence of a state-sponsored National Lottery devoting its surplus to "good causes" says the same thing. So, as Mr Blair believes it is "good to do good", he is surely under an obligation to clarify what is good and what is not, and to remove from the "good" category anything for which a clear consensus does not exist. Above all, that means excluding spending on private schools, which increases social division.

While this obvious injustice remains in the law, the new tax break for developing-world charities, and widening the definition to include the relief of unemployment, seem very much like tinkering at the edges.

Welcome back to the fray, Mr President

PRESIDENT CLINTON is to hold a news conference today, his first for more than a year. He returns to the fray an older and wiser man, with his extraordinary resilience lending a kind of dignity to the mere fact of his survival in office. His audiences, the journalists who will ask him questions, the American people and the wider world, all see him differently now. His image is stripped of all illusion, and yet he remains popular and can still inspire a kind of weary, unambitious hope.

The year spent in the Lewinsky morass has done more damage abroad than at home, and so it is primarily to America's responsibilities in the world that the President should turn for the last 22 months of his term. With the peace process in Northern Ireland poised again on the edge, the

White House's full attention could once again play a decisive role. With Nato - and its new central European members - on the verge of military action in Serbia, Mr Clinton's skills of diplomacy and rhetoric are needed. And with a newly assertive euro bloc engaged in trade skirmishes with the US, his commitment to free trade needs to stand up against the American instinct for protection.

Welcome back, Mr President, there is work to be done.

Congratulations!

QUITE APART from illustrating the absurdity of awarding knighthoods to pop stars, Sir Cliff's sanctimonious lecturing of his fellow (untitled) pop stars for refusing to perform free of charge on the night of 31 December is a bit of a cheek. Pop and sermons do not mix. If Barbra Streisand can earn £13m to sing in the new year in Las Vegas, Cliff Richard should say just one word: Congratulations!

Making Europe more democratic will also make it too powerful

IF THIS week has done anything, it has demonstrated that Europe isn't always boring. Just as *The Sun*, from however distorted a perspective, helped to interest a large section of the British public in German politics for the first time by demonising Oskar Lafontaine last November, so the week-long crisis in the European Commission has powerfully increased the salience of the European Union as an issue. Ms Cresson has, if nothing else, made it on to the front pages of the larger-circulation British papers.

So much the better. Since democratic legitimacy is one of the issues arising from the catastrophe, it's appropriate that the people should start to care. The danger, however, is that expectations will be too high. Will Europe really never be the same again? Is this a historic opportunity, or time for some mere window-dressing? Are we in for the big bang or the quick fix?

The familiar horse-trading under way to decide who is the new Commission president makes it look very much as if not much has changed. The job of who runs the devastated Commission matters, of course. Do not assume that Tony Blair necessarily wants Romano Prodi, despite his cordial relationship with the former prime minister of Italy. The signs in Whitehall are that he might, ideally, prefer Wim Kok, the Dutch Prime Minister, if he became available. If a Northern European candidate is deemed essential - as it may prove to be, after a long period of North European presidents - Mr Blair may prefer Javier Solana, the Secretary General of Nato. But he will keep his

counsel over the next few days. However, no one, least of all Mr Blair, thinks that the right choice of president solves the problems on its own. Nor will some of the necessary innovations for improving the Commission, which include a British-style auditor general with his own independent budget and security of tenure, and a trimming back of some of the Commission's ever-expanding remit to make it more economically and single-market focused. A bigger question is how to make the Commission more visibly accountable.

And here an idea that was much discussed in Whitehall last year and was then shelved, may just be coming back into its own: that of senior ministers for Europe from each member state probably reporting directly to their respective premiers, almost certainly at cabinet level, and responsible for sustaining the authority of the European Council (made up of heads of government) between their six-monthly summits. The ministers could even be permanently placed in Brussels.

The argument is that there is a ministerial power vacuum between the member-state governments and the Commission that was not originally intended. A decade ago or more the EU foreign ministers largely filled this vacuum through the General Affairs Council. But the increasing focus of this council on external issues (such as the Balkans) means that it is no longer as effective in this supervisory role. It was one reason why Jacques Delors, no less, went so far - and further than the British - as to suggest



DONALD MACINTYRE

Will we be able to grasp a historic opportunity, or will we just see mere window-dressing?

a council of deputy prime ministers permanently based in Brussels.

Such a move would cause tensions within, as well as between, some member states. Take Britain, where it might have called into question the continuing responsibility of the Foreign Office for internal European affairs, especially if, as was hinted at the time the idea was current, Peter Mandelson had been a candidate for the job. It would have meant a second, cabinet-level minister in the Foreign Office. But another possibility might have been - and perhaps could be one day again - to transfer the main EU responsibilities to the Cabinet Office. This would annoy the FCO. On the other hand, the Cabinet Office was considered a possible home for European policy as long ago as the early Seventies, when Britain first joined the

Community. And some other European ministers - for example that of France - are in the equivalent departments to the Cabinet Office.

More pertinently, however, many of the smaller states deeply resented the idea that a powerful new arm of the European Council was suddenly stationed in Brussels overseeing the Commission, which they see as their protector against the predation of the bigger states - and reducing some of its powers in the process. The problem is that such an argument is much less tenable after this week's explosive fraud report.

No one has better summed up the dilemma posed by the crisis in Brussels than Dennis Skinner, who told the Commons with brutal clarity this week: "If [leaving] the democratic deficit resulted in a European Parliament that could properly scrutinise fraud and all the rest of it, we would have a United States of Europe. My Right Hon friend the Prime Minister does not want that, nor do I."

Precisely. British reaction to the crisis this week has fallen, with variants, into two broad categories. One is Eurosceptic glee that it has exposed the European Commission, and by nimble extension the European Union, as deeply corrupt, woefully un-British, wilfully incompetent and much more trouble than it's worth. The other is a breathless rejoicing among the liberal pro-European intelligentsia that a thousand democratic flowers will bloom: the European Parliament, by forcing the Commission's resignation, has come of age at last and should assume new powers;

the Commissioners should be elected by the masses in their own country - a proposal for which the British Prime Minister, at least, is not ready - and candidates for president should fight it out in a pan-European super-election. Transparency and accountability will rule for the next millennium.

The problem with the first argument is that no one, not even Michael Portillo, has thought of a better way of enforcing the single market, along with its good old Anglo-Saxon virtues, such as fair competition and subsidy-free industries, than having a supranational body to do it. The problem with the second is what you could call the Skinner paradox. The trouble with democratic legitimacy is that it can make the institutions that have it too damned legitimate; suddenly an elected Commission, or a Strasbourg Parliament, with even sharper teeth, will see its power increased relative to, and to some extent at the expense of, the elected national governments to which the EU's institutions are theoretically answerable.

This is the unresolved conundrum of European reform. A semi-permanent session of high-powered European ministers reporting to the national leaders and spending much of their time in Brussels doesn't, at least on its own, answer the problem. But it would be a recognition of the infinitely greater role played by the EU in the domestic life of its member states than when the present structure was set up. And it would mean that there were some important and accountable figures keeping a stern eye on the Commission.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I'm not going to judge people who are asking for money to work that night, but I am not going to accept payments." Sir Cliff Richard, pop singer, discussing the Millennium Eve

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"From an evolutionary point of view, man has stopped moving, if he ever did move." Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, French theologian and paleontologist

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ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Comment on the sacking of six officials from the International Olympic Committee

THE CURRENT IOC has lost the right to lead. A purge is needed - that of Samaranch. But can a corrupted body clean itself? Sponsors, largely US corporations that underwrite

the games, do not want to be associated with a tawdry affair. If sponsors pull out, it will be impossible for cities such as this one to stage Olympic-style events in the future. And if

reform does not take place, sponsors will flee. Olympic rules are clear; they simply have been ignored and, with them, so have the Olympic ideals of fair play and international good will. Total reform, not a whitewash, is essential. *San Antonio Express News, US*

continuing scandals associated with the Olympic movement is understandable. If the Olympic ideal is to be revived, the process of choosing the host city for the games needs to be made much more transparent and IOC members more accountable. *The Age, Australia*

THERE ARE even murmurs of a European Union boycott of the Sydney Games. While this would be most regrettable, the disgust at the

THERE'S GOOD news and bad news about the Olympic scandals. The good news is that the International Olympic Committee yesterday expelled six of its members identified as having taken bribes to award the 2002 Winter Games to Salt Lake City. The bad news is that IOC Chairman Juan Antonio Samaranch is around. The problem with international organizations like the IOC is that they are prone to corruption on two fronts. First,

because there is no institutional oversight, members begin to believe that they can get away with anything. Until now. Second, they begin to confuse their own interests with the high ideals they claim to be promoting. The IOC as constituted is probably un-reformable. New blood is certainly needed if anything worthwhile is to get done at all. Samaranch must go. The sooner the better. *Globe & Mail, Canada*

bird!

PANDORA

STANLEY KUBRICK'S death robbed cinema of one of its great eccentrics, but Marlon Brando (pictured) still punches his considerable weight. A baffled Charlie Sheen watched as the Master of the Mumble, while filming *Free Money*, dashed into a bathroom where he inexplicably stuck his head into the lavatory bowl. Brando also repeatedly hammered female lead Mira Sorvino about the nugget with one of her high heels during shooting. But Brando's methodology seems contagious on set: "Mira really got into it," according to director Yves Simoneau. "She was asking him for more."

ALLEGED ARTIST Martin Creed, a friend of Damien Hirst, has got up the noses of the good citizens of London's Clapton. The conceptual Creed plans to start up a Grade II listed building with a neon sign proclaiming "Everything is going to be alright". Oh no it's not, say residents of Linscott Road, home of the Portico, the 18th-century house in the eye of this particular cyclone. Apparently the local worthies feel Creed's project is disrespectful. One suggested nobbling the illumination, so it reads "EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT".

FOLLOWING PANDORA'S revelations about Gordon Ramsay's unhygienic kitchen practices, it seems Kensington & Chelsea environmental health officers have become interested in the Truffle Thief's den. "We will be visiting the restaurant by the end of this week," one confirmed.

LAST WORD on St Paddy's Day shenanigans: when the Irish opened their new Beijing embassy on their national day a couple of years ago, an aide placed some shamrocks in a cut-



glass bowl of Waterford Crystal in the new embassy lobby. The ambassador was peeved to subsequently see the shamrocks had vanished. Then he noticed his Chinese guests picking green detritus from their teeth...

IT'S TAKEN them 20 years but *Starsky & Hutch* trio David Soul, Paul Michael Glaser and Antonio "Huggy Bear" Fargas will finally sit down in the same room together - in London's Brixton next week. Glaser, who's carved out a successful career as a TV director in LA, is waving the flag to support his sometime co-stars' show *Alone in the Fringe*, a theatre-music type event, playing sporadically at (surprise!) The Fringe from 22 March until 8 April. This reunion may be billed as Seventies nostalgia - but at least it's pukka billion Seventies nostalgia.

WHICH IS more than can be said for ITV's hideously lame pseudo-Seventies sitcom *Days Like These*. If its creators thought that anyone during the Seventies used phrases like "sorted" and "I'm there for you" they not only weren't there themselves, they're not all here either.

SOMEONE WHO'S not just here and there but everywhere is Robin Cook. If it isn't one thing (private life, smear campaigns) it's another - like this. A broadcast hack calling the Coochie Monster this week for a comment was told, "No, you can't speak to him, he's too busy running the country." Which country would that be then? Kosovo? Sierra Leone? Or is there something our Number One Guy isn't telling us?

WINNER OF Pandora's sancer of milk this week is the feline e-zine *Chic Happens*. It assigned a reporter to cover Minnie Prada's Miu Miu show in Milan. The run-of-show notes consisted, in their entirety, of a four-line poem by quondam Hollywood movie director Tim Burton:

*Stick Boy liked
Match Girl.
He liked her
a lot.
He liked her
cute figure.
He thought she
was hot.
CH's scribe
responded:
I tried on the
outfit.
It burst at the seams
Thanks anyway Miu
Miu.
I'll stick to my jeans.
Miao!*

Contact Pandora by e-mail: pandora@independent.co.uk

Keep on spending, Your Majesty



PHILIP HENSHER

It wasn't the existence of the overdraft that surprised us, but the fact that it was only £4m

A GREAT deal of amusement and entertainment has been caused all round by the revelation of the Queen Mother's overdraft. It probably didn't come as a surprise to anyone at all; it was always one of those things which everybody "knew", propagated more by a desire by the whole nation that it should be true than by a sober assessment of its probability.

There are some stories which, however intrinsically unlikely or fabulous they may be (such as, say, that two male cabinet ministers in the last government were sleeping with each other), spread to all four corners of the world, simply because people would like them to be true. A Chinese tofu-farmer, a Papuan hunter-gatherer or an American undergraduate may be quite unable to indicate Europe on a map of the world. But you can bet your life that, if they see a particular Hollywood actor appearing at their local multiplex, they will all turn to their girl and say: "You know, he likes to push hamsters up his bottom. A friend of my brother's knows someone who knows him."

The story of the Queen Mother's

overdraft, I always thought, fell rather into this category. We all have friends of friends who know someone who was once at dinner with the Queen and heard her say: "My goodness, let's not talk about Mummy's overdraft". And we all wanted it to be true. It has all the hallmarks of a really great urban myth: the nice old lady who keeps up the middle-class front of cosy

family life before shutting the door at Clarence House to feed the corgis on Serravallo.

And the other part of it is, of course, that the rest of the Royal Family are such splendid, notorious tightwads. You wouldn't want the Queen to be an extravagant entertainer, and she isn't. If you want exquisitely inventive canapés and wines of lavish quality, you'd be better off going to a midweek party at the embassy of some slightly grubby Eastern European state. The Queen has nothing to prove - she knows quite well that nobody remembers a party at Windsor by the brilliantly witty canapés.

So it's agreeable to think that one member of the Firm, and the least likely one at that, really does continue to indulge herself and her guests on a truly imperial scale. We all wanted to think it was the case, and now it seems that, unlike most such urban myths, what we wanted to believe turns out to be true.

The disappointing thing about it, however, is the size of the overdraft. If the newspapers are to be believed, she owes the bank about £4m. Four million quid! My God, is that all the

debt she can acquire in the course of 98 years? I could run up debts of four million in a fortnight!

The size of the Queen Mother's income is pretty well unknown; there is the £550,000-odd from the Civil List, of course, which probably just about covers the servants, if that; the rest of it is private income, and none of our business. But what we can pretty well say is that her way of life has probably exceeded her means by a small, steady margin, and not exceeded the means of her family at all. If anyone - the Queen Mother, her family, the bank - were remotely worried about the debt, I expect we would see her famous Monet down at Sotheby's, and the supply of gin and Dubonnet would continue unchecked.

So what on earth are the papers going on about? The extraordinary something-must-be-done lather some people were getting themselves into about the overdraft had to be seen to be believed. I expect sooner or later the debt will have to be repaid; and if it comes from public funds, we will know about it. But it won't, of course it won't, and with that, the slightest justification

for writing about the overdraft disappears. The only reason, really, the papers had for going into it was prurience and vulgarity; and their striking of moral postures was far less attractive than the extravagance they pretended to denounce.

The reason the information had any coverage, of course, was all to do with the betrayal of illusions. Much as the middle classes would like the Queen Mum to be a nice cosy granny in a bat from British Home Stores, I think they ought to accept that she is not. She is the last Empress of India. And even if, like me, you think the monarchy probably ought to be closed down at some point, we have an obligation towards its past; an obligation which we should not betray for the sake of a measly four million quid.

May her taps be made of gold, and spew gin and Dubonnet night and day; may orchids be strewn in the path of her horses whenever they race. Because, frankly, spectacle is cheap, and the amusement, fascination and gaiety afforded the nation by HM, and her extravagance, is not something we should even think of putting a price on.

So is corruption really just a vice of the Latin nations?



FELIPE FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO

The notion that we southerners are more corrupt than northerners looks increasingly a myth

CORRUPTION IS a Latin vice, according to Europeans in the Teutonic north. The fault lines separating them from the culture of the south are moral. As you approach the Mediterranean, you have to buy bureaucrats and bribe businessmen. Southerners need sweeteners. In the lands of olive oil, palms need greasing. Romano Prodi is branded as unfit for the European Commission presidency on the grounds that northerners could not tolerate an Italian in charge of sleaze.

Yet, in the light of the current Euro-scandal the north looks naughtier than the Mediterranean. In deference to the myth of northern purity, the committee of "sages" who drew up the explosive report on fraud, nepotism, cronyism, malpractice and mismanagement in Brussels was weighted in favour of northerners.

The south was represented by one Spaniard. His colleagues were a Swede, a Belgian, a Dutchman - and a Frenchman who, as a deputy in the French legislature, represented Finistère. The Italian commissioners were exonerated by the sages. Spanish and Portuguese commissioners jobbed their wives into work in Brussels but without infringing proper procedures; their excess was of zeal for the family values we hear so much about. The Spaniard, Manuel Marín, sometimes acted slyly but was prompt to clean up fraud in the aid programme to Mediterranean countries. Among commissioners, he is the only southerner whose integrity seems less than fully burnished by the report, whereas against the northerners Jacques Santer and Erkki Liikanen of Finland, allegations of nepotism are merely said to be "unproven". The cronyism of which the German Monika Wulf-Mathies is accused is the result, in the sages' restrained-

ly damning language, of "an inappropriate procedure". Edith Cresson, painted as the scarlet woman of the case, comes from just about as far north in France as you can get.

This subversion of north-south stereotypes - respectively of clean hands and sticky fingers - seems in line with the overall balance of scandal in today's Europe. North and south are like pot and kettle and neither outshines the other. Though Britain's commissioners are guileless in Brussels, Tony's cronies hang around Westminster, where cash has bought influence. Suspicions of corrupt electoral practices have recently led to the exclusion of an MEP. The contest to be the Labour candidate to head the Welsh government has been strewn with sex, drugs and rumours of vote-rigging. In the era of open government and press vigilance scandal seems ubiquitous. Europe's juicier recent political scandals have been evenly spread across the map. In Ireland,

a former prime minister has been let off his tax bill by a commission led by his successor's brother-in-law.

In Belgium, a Secretary-General of Nato and 11 other high officials were condemned in a flagrant corruption case, and a deputy prime minister was murdered in an alleged attempt at a cover-up. In Finland, a spy scandal last year exposed the corruptibility of public servants; in France, the president has been implicated in a scam involving sinecures for political cronies. In Luxembourg, the health minister resigned because his department had been paying phoney hospital bills. The notion that southerners are more corrupt than northerners looks increasingly like a myth.

England, in particular, has a long history of spectacularly corrupt plunderers of the system. It has been alleged on behalf of Edith Cresson that in employing her dentist as her scientific adviser at public expense she was merely showing rational favouritism to someone she trusted. This recalls Sir Francis Bacon's defence against corruption when he was Lord Chancellor of England in the early 17th century: he had taken bribes, but did not allow them to influence his judgement. Justifying his depredations, the 18th-century imperialist Robert Clive declared himself "astounded at my own moderation". When David Lloyd George was prime minister, he sold titles of honour and preferment. The "lavender list" that bore the names of Harold Wilson's honours exuded a similar scent of corruption.

It would be rash, however, to suppose that no great historic transformation is in progress. Europe's map of sleaze is being re-drawn against the background of two long-term processes of change. First is a change in perceptions. Historically, northern contempt for



Romano Prodi is unfit for the EU presidency, say northerners

southern corruptibility has been based, in part, on an irrational inference from the whiff of the south: the rapid rot and taint, the debilitating climate, the malodorous air. Images of corruption came easily to the "curiously impertinent" writers and artists who formed their fellow northerners' perceptions of southern Europe over 300 years. A conviction of superior parity, moreover, was, until recently, part of Protestants' myth of themselves, enshrined in the theory of the sociologist Max Weber, who claimed that Protestant culture was characterised by "inner-worldly asceticism". Nowadays no one is likely to be deceived by climatic determinism or believe Weber's theory.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that changing perceptions reflect a real change in the morals of public life in the south. Corruptibility comes not from the air or the climate but from the economic environment and the political culture. In the 17th and 18th centuries, relatively cash-rich, high-tax regimes such as those of Britain, the Nether-

lands and Sweden could, for most of the time, afford salaried functionaries who did not normally have to buy their offices from crown or state. In France, Spain, Italy and parts of Germany in the same period, public service was besmirched by venality; office-holders bought their jobs and had to exploit them for all they could get. There was therefore a long period when standards of public service were genuinely more professional and less venal in some parts of Europe than in others.

In the last 200 years this has gradually, fitfully ceased to be true. We now have more-or-less-uniform systems throughout the European Union. Mutual acculturation has made south and north ever more like each other. We are beginning to recognise our prejudices about each other as historically instructive but misleadingly irrelevant. Let no part of Europe think itself better in this respect than another: corruption is everybody's problem.

The author's latest book is *Truth: A History*

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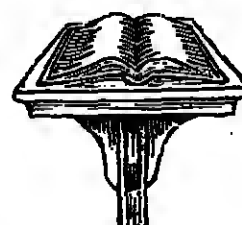
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Australia's debt to the Irish



PODIUM

JOHN HOWARD
From a speech given in Melbourne by the Prime Minister of Australia to mark St Patrick's Day

OF ALL the many tributes that have shaped the mighty river which is the modern Australia, none in a sense has been more distinctive and more important than the contribution of the Irish to this country. The Irish inheritance is part of the modern Australian identity.

It has brought many things to Australia, it has contributed in many distinctive ways. It is impossible, for example, to hear the sort of music that we have heard this morning and not realise the enormous contribution that it made to shaping music in this country.

One of the captivating, indeed endearing, things about being an Australian in 1999 is that as we approach the Centenary of the Federation of our nation all of us are reflecting more and more on what made us as we are today. Some 35 to 40 per cent of Australians claim an Irish ancestry and do it proudly.

In my own case, my maternal great-grandmother was born in County Westmeath and my paternal great-grandfather was born in Portadown in County Armagh. A fairly familiar pattern of so many Aus-

tralians. The Irish have really been part of the Australian story now for more than 200 years. And their culture, their attitudes, their passions, their way of life have become inseparably part of the Australian way of life.

But, of course, when we think of Ireland and we think of Australia we don't only think of it nostalgically and romantically, we also, and historically, think of it in contemporary terms. And today Ireland is a modern thriving successful economy. It is indeed an economy with probably the fastest economic growth in the European Union. It is an economy that has been transformed over the last 20 years. It has defied the critics.

I first visited Ireland in 1977. I went as an Australian minister for special trade negotiations. I was trying to get a better trade deal for Australian produce in what was then the European Common Market and I got pretty lean pickings just about everywhere I went, in every capital. And at that time the Irish economy was really struggling. Since then things have changed and I am delighted at the incredible suc-

cess that the Irish economy has achieved in recent times.

We honour, as Australians, the contribution of the Irish to the history of this country. We recognise that it has not always been an experience free of discrimination and intolerance. Like all societies through the 20th century we went through our experiences of the divisions of sectarianism within our community.

And for more than 100 years

the Irish in Australia who were overwhelmingly Catholic have suffered the discrimination of being forced to pay for the education of their children in their faith. And I am very proud, of course, that that well known member of the Melbourne Scots and self-declared humble Presbyterian, Robert Menzies, more than anybody else brought to an end that discrimination. And now Australia probably has a system of openness and tolerance and freedom of choice in relation to the education of its children second to none anywhere in the world.

Regarding the fragile peace process - and it is fragile - we were reminded again only this morning by our television bulletins that the mad men and women on both sides of the argument are still to be found and those people are to be shunned and the example of those two great Nobel Prize winners, John Hume and David Trimble, are to be very much respected.

I know that all Australians who have any affinity for Ireland and their Irish associations will join in prayers and hopes for a successful fruition of the Good Friday agreement.

It is a great privilege for me to acknowledge the immense Irish contribution to our nation, without which we wouldn't be what we are today. I can't conceive of Australian politics having been anything remotely resembling what it has been over the last 40 or 50 years without the Irish contribution.

For so long, of course, the Irish contribution to Australian politics was seen as overwhelmingly belonging to the Australian Labor Party for obvious historical reasons. The Liberal Party that I joined in 1957 when I left school in Sydney didn't boast an enormous number of people of Irish Catholic descent. But I can say that over 40 or 50 years that has changed and I can say to all of you that there is an adequate supply of Fabians and Heffermans and Herrons and McNamaras - and indeed the list can go on - of people of Irish descent bringing their passion, their particular view, to the lifeblood and to the existence of our political party.

It is a wonderful occasion. I salute the Irish contribution to our nation. It wouldn't be what it is today without it.

For the sake of our children



DEBORAH ORR
Men are letting down their children, in part because they no longer know what fathers are for

IT'S BEEN another fantastic week for children. Or rather, in exactly 20 years there will be a fantastic week for children, when we can all celebrate the wiping out of child abuse by the NSPCC and the wiping out of child poverty by New Labour. Both groups have asserted that their aim is possible within a generation, and the existence of the second pledge tends to give more - though not enough - credence to the first.

Labour's pledge was announced yesterday by Tony Blair, as he delivered this year's Beveridge Lecture in London's East End. Calling for a return to the progressive image of welfare, which was fostered at the time of the Beveridge report in 1942, Blair spent much time reiterating the Government's successes so far in this department - thanks again for that budget, Gordon - and talking of "radical welfare reform", the details of which remained rather more sketchy.

Blair also stressed that the real growth of social security spending had been cut by almost 1 per cent a year and £5bn less had been spent than the last government had planned for. The implication seems to be that child poverty can be eradicated cheaply. Maybe that's why it's going to take 20 years. Child poverty in Britain, like human hunger in the world, is one of these problems we could sort out by mid-summer's eve if we really wanted to. And Blair knows perfectly well that we don't really want to.

Which brings us to the second theme of his speech, which is tackling the problem that really will need at least two decades to sort out. That, of course, is persuading the comfortably off that the only way to make Britain a better place for them to live in is for the disadvantaged to shell out their hard-earned cash not on themselves but on the disadvantaged.

Frankly the benefits of doing so are easy to imagine, for we know that poverty breeds not just more poverty, but also crime, teenage motherhood, neglect and abuse of children, educational failure and a host of other social ills. Meanwhile the folly of failing to subsidise the poor is something we live with every day.

The solution of the middle class-



Does Britain suffer from 'kiddie apartheid', with 'nice' middle-class children being kept away from the 'bogey-kiddies'?

Stephen Mansfield

es to the problem of living in a society that includes millions of children living below the poverty line is kiddie apartheid. It starts with the morning school run in the gas-guzzling car to the school that does well in the league tables, rather than the school that the children could get to under their own steam. And it ends with the bedroom television-watching that the LSE says half of all six- to seven-year-olds indulges in.

Parenting culture is becoming ever more concerned with keeping its kiddies away from the bogey-kiddies to the severe detriment of both groups of children and all levels of society. And as well as being bad for children, maintaining kiddie apartheid costs a lot more time and money than would be spent on subsidising the poorest.

Which brings us to another interesting point. While I was impressed by Flash Gordon's children-centred budget, there are two notable aspects to the general policy underlying the budget that belie its own aims. First, there's the emphasis on work. This doesn't apply only to lone mothers, who the Government would clearly prefer to see in work, even if it is detrimental to their par-

enting. (Although, to its credit, the Government has allowed them to retain the right to parent full-time if they strongly feel they should do so.) It applies to all parents.

While the budget helped families a great deal, the families it rewarded the most were poor working families, who benefit from the 10p starting rate for income tax, the 1p cut in income tax, children's tax credit and the family allowance. Obviously, for the really poor - parents living on benefits - only the last of these measures will be applicable.

While New Labour asserts that these measures will lift 700,000 children out of poverty, it is estimated that a staggering 3.9 million will still be left below the poverty line. Clearly there are only two ways in which these children can be helped out of poverty - either by getting their parents out to work, or by raising their benefits.

What New Labour is clearly afraid of - witness Blair's recent tough presentation of the benefit-fraud "crackdown" announced a few weeks ago by Alistair Darling - is raising the benefits of lone mothers, thus making it yet more tempting for deprived teenage girls to have babies alone and bring them

up on welfare. But the vast majority of lone mothers haven't in fact chosen to live this way. It is the men who are letting down their children, in part because they no longer seem to know what fathers are for.

While the difficulties of bringing fathers to account financially have been well illustrated by the workings of the Child Support Agency, I believe that moving the burden of breadwinning, as well as parenting, on to single mothers is fraught with difficulties, not just for poor children, but for the institution of the family that New Labour is sincerely but misguidedly trying to help. What we really have to start learning to value is parenting, not just the parenting that mothers provide, but that which fathers provide as well.

This is the next seismic shift that society has got to make if it is to progress. There is a wealth of evidence all around us that the new model of parenting whereby both parents work is not a good one. It tries women, it causes dissatisfaction, it creates strains between men and women which end with broken families. While women don't want to lose the advantages they have gained over the past 30

years, there is a growing awareness that the kind of equality whereby women simply live more like men is not a suitable way for families to thrive.

And while Freud was condemned by feminists because of his continual assertions that case study A to case study Z had psychological problems because of their mother's smother-love, it seems to me that it's possible that all of our babies have been thrown out with the bathwater. Maybe Freud's observations don't mark him out as a misogynist at all. Maybe they instead warned us right at the beginning of the century that the working patterns that evolved along with the industrial revolution left too much of the parenting burden with women and not enough of it with men.

I know a couple of men who gave up work when their babies were born, since their partners earned more than they did. Both of them have brought up their daughters marvellously, even though they share some of the problems that women did in the days when they were expected to stay at home.

What we clearly need now is more equitable parenting, in which

both mother and father do some breadwinning and some homemaking. To achieve this (and, as a by-product, full employment) we need shorter working hours for a start - ours are the highest in Europe - and far more part-time work. In fact, as life becomes yet more complex, there's a very good case for a four-day instead of a five-day week.

We also need to prepare more for the years during which our children are small. While the Government is right to concentrate resources on this period in people's lives, we should be thinking about providing for our parenting years privately as well, with parent plans supplementing pension plans; the acceptance by employers that men are as likely as women to need time off, or even some years of part-time work, to look after their children; and, immediately, tax breaks for childcare costs.

This is the revolution we should be planning over the next 20 years. Child poverty we can eradicate by the end of the next Labour government. Only money can stop poverty. Radical reform should be directed at creating far more complex kinds of change.

RIGHT OF REPLY

KEITH PORTEOUS WOOD



The general secretary of the National Secular Society responds to an article by Andreas Whittam Smith

ANDREAS WHITTAM Smith is wrong to say that the Church of England is "declining much faster" than the "more successful" Roman Catholic Church. According to Religious Trends, published by Christian Research, C of E attendance declined by 12 per cent between 1980 and 1995 whereas the Roman Catholic's dropped 31 per cent, more than any other major church. Mr Whittam Smith claims that the Catholic Church's purported smaller decline in attendances results from its "discipline and unpopular teaching on sex and marriage". In fact, these are the very teachings and discipline that have caused the RC church to haemorrhage.

Many RC adherents have "lapsed", repelled by inhumane RC doctrines, the worst of which is its policy on "artificial" contraception. Many openly flout the teachings on birth control. World-wide, the policy results in over-population and increased poverty. The proscription of condoms also frustrates the fight against the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Mr Whittam Smith takes particular exception to Dr Carey's claim that the C of E "is a generation away from extinction". Carey's remarks, probably intended to rally the troops after a failed decade of evangelism, may be even more prophetic than he realised. The pressure to create women bishops will become irresistible, despite the Archbishop of York's resignation threat. The Lambeth conference exposed another potential split, over the issue of gay priests. Could the C of E survive multiple schisms?

If the next Pope is as reactionary as the present one, the National Secular Society expects the Catholic Church, too, will soon be predicting its own demise in this country.

Where myth meets reality

FRIDAY BOOK

GOTHAM: A HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY TO 1898
BY EDWIN G. BURROWS AND MIKE WALLACE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, £30



America's most important financial centre, it was a rough-and-tumble company town. Under Dutch rule, the settlement was run by the West India Company, which attracted "the motley assortment of souls in Christendom". A mostly male group of Dutch, English, Swedish, German, Danish, French and others had come to the bountiful New World, and to this city, to seek their fortunes in trading. Multiculturalism and money were defining elements from the outset.

Things didn't change when James Stuart, Duke of York, decided that he would quite like a taste of the big apple

in the 1680s. York took the city and its vast surrounding wilderness from the Dutch with ease, and established a tremendously tight reign on the colony which filled his coffers. New York (as it was renamed) was important for a number of reasons. It was an already established centre of trade; it was ideally located to keep a check on the French further north in Canada; and, it ensured that Britain controlled virtually all of America's east coast.

Just over a century later, it was money matters, as much as philosophical ideas about liberty, which led Americans to revolt against British rule. Shortly after Evacuation Day in 1783, when the last British redcoats left New York, the city began to re-establish itself as a financial centre which had been corrupted under those "blood-sucking harpies", the occupying British troops. In the early years of the Republic, New York was a magnet for cash- and credit-rich immigrants eager to speculate financially.

It didn't take long for New York to assert its economic power, and overtake other cities (such as Philadelphia and Boston) as the pre-eminent city of the US. When the Erie Canal established a water route into America's heartland in the 1820s-30s, *The Times* predicted that New York would become the "London of the New World". That acute observer of American life, Fanny Trollope, compared New York to Venice, which rises "from the sea, and like that fairest of cities in the days of its glory, receives into its lap tribute of all the riches of the earth". Even at its lowest points, New York



'The great place of the Western Continent' in 1898. Hulton Getty

is a city of comebacks - one reason why it has such a special place in the American imagination. Reversals of fortune, as much as rags-to-riches narratives, are central to New York's history. To cope with the great crash of 1837, New Yorkers developed a literature and "lore of bankruptcy". The depression novel was invented to help explain the precariousness of social ties in a boom-and-bust economy. Largely due to the railroad, clipper and steamships, by the mid-19th century New York's financial muscle could be flexed once more. The gold rush in the West also filled New York's numerous banking institutions with seemingly endless resources. Increased manufacturing followed, and by 1853, New York felt confident enough to build a Crystal Palace to rival that of London's at the Great Exhibition.

By the end of the 19th century, New York was established as America's premier city. Media, manufacturing, bank-

ing, culture - virtually every aspect of American life centred there. For Walt Whitman, New York was "the great place of the Western Continent, the heart, the brain, the focus, the main spring, the pinnacle, the extremity, the no more beyond of the new world". For its citizens then (as now), all roads led to New York.

Gotham is a tremendously successful urban history, which weaves together many strands, including slavery and immigration, political economy and cultural history. It focuses on the period from the Revolution to 1898, when New York gradually defined itself in a young, ambitious country. One of the really interesting things about this study is that the history of the city and its personality seems so familiar, well before the advent of the iconic New York (of skyscrapers and great views) we think of today. And for that fascinating history, I eagerly await the next volume.

MARK TURNER

FRIDAY POEM

DIV
BY JOAN JOHNSTON

I've spent all week wiring it up
and he hasn't even noticed - too busy
installing an ornamental well
beside the gnomes on the patio,
fitting dimmer-switches
inside the kitchen alcoves.

Two days from now
this house will implode
and when the dust finally settles
I'll be gone on the Metro
with the detonator, the vibrator
and one change of clothes.

From 'What You Want' by Joan Johnston, published at £3.95 by Diamond Twig Press, 5 Bentinck Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6UT

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Rod Hull

TELEVISION IS a great consumer of talent. It uses people up and then spits them out into the oblivion of panto and seaside piers. Rod Hull, the children's entertainer known to millions throughout the Seventies and Eighties for his manic act with the anarchic puppet Emu, a bad-tempered and aggressive blue and yellow bird, provides a cautionary tale. He rose to the top of his profession but fell from grace because of over-exposure, mismanagement and his own naive nature.

Hull was born in 1935 on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. His father Leonard was a jack-of-all-trades with an optimistic outlook on life and a succession of odd jobs. "Life at home was like a panto," Hull later recalled:

We were quite poor. My father never succeeded in anything, but that never worried him. Or me. Or my mother Hilda who was as he was and terribly proud of him. It was just Dad. Life to him was a giggle. He always gave me bags of love. And he taught me that as long as you've got a sparkle in your eye, life will be good.

The young Rod discovered the delights of Charles Dickens through *The Pickwick Papers* and made puppet theatres out of cornflake packets. Adopting his father's philosophy, Hull, who had a stammer and was a rather shy boy, decided to go on stage to conquer both problems. By the time he was 15, he had joined the local concert party where he met his first wife, Sandra, a hairdresser. They married six years later and had two daughters.

Having done his National Service in the Royal Air Force, Hull qualified as an electrician. In 1958, he and his family decided to follow his parents' example and emigrate to Australia. At first, Hull used his qualifications and designed floodlights for bowling greens but soon, he got a job as an electrician in a new television studio. Inevitably, Hull got the TV bug and began writing scripts for others before eventually hosting his own early morning children's show.

In 1963, the classic double act with the giant and uncontrollable Emu was born. "A viewer sent in a real emu's egg which I put on the radiator to hatch," explained Hull when asked about the genesis of this unlikely partnership. "A few weeks later, I was wondering what we could get to come out of the bloody thing when I came across Emu in the props room. I picked him up and the whole thing just took off." The flightless Australian bird - *Dromastus Novaezelandiae* - looked like an ostrich but certainly didn't

behave like one. In fact the animal had quite a bad temper and children immediately identified with the creature's mischievous character.

Hull supported the actor Warren Mitchell on a tour of Australia during which he met his second wife Cher, an artist. "I knew the moment I saw her that she was the woman for me. I felt an excitement I had never experienced before. I wanted her to be a part of me. She showed me the potential within myself," he said. Later, Cher and Rod wrote several children's books together in the series *Emu's Little World*.

In 1970, following the lead of many Australian-based entertainers from Rolf Harris to Olivia Newton-John, Hull, who "felt homesick", came back to Britain. Emu's unpredictable behaviour soon made Rod Hull a national institution. No respecter of authority or royalty, Emu ate the Queen Mother's bouquet at the *Royal Variety Show* in 1974. "She didn't bat an eyelid. Just looked very concerned and said: 'I think your Emu is rather hungry,'" revealed Hull.

'I've never felt affection for Emu. he is just part of my work, like a word processor would be to someone else'

Emu acted out a similar stunt on Michael Parkinson in 1976, wrestling the presenter to the ground and devouring his shoe. The British boxer John Conté looked on bemused; Hull and Emu wisely didn't pick on him. The clip remains a firm favourite with BBC archivists and compilers.

Like many puppeteers, Hull had a love-hate relationship with his creation. "I've never felt affection for Emu. He is just part of my work, like a word processor would be to someone else. But I'm grateful he brought me affluence," he said. Rod and Emu fronted a succession of popular television shows. *Rod Hull and Emu* paved the way for EBC (Emu's Broadcasting Company) and later *Emu's World*, *Emu's Wide World* and *EMU-TV*. The pair fought Grobags

the evil witch in *Emu's Pink Windmill*, made several records, sold out the London Palladium on a regular basis, appeared on *This Is Your Life* and even created their own pantomime: *Emu in Pantomime*. "It was a wonderful time. Life could not have been better," remembered Hull, who, at the time, could command £5,000 per show. Having appeared several times on the *Royal Variety Show*, Hull adapted the idea to his target audience and devised the first *Children's Royal Variety Performance* which he hosted in 1981.

However, he soon experienced difficulties similar to that of his fellow entertainer Ken Dodd. By 1986, Hull had become one of the highest paid entertainers on TV and bought Restoration House, a 32-roomed Elizabethan mansion in Rochester, Kent, which he hoped to restore to its original splendour. "We were trying to save it from being knocked down and replaced by a car park. I felt so proud that I - who was once a little child with a speech impediment - was able to restore such a historic place. Dickens, who writes about the house both in *Great Expectations* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was my idol," said Hull, who played Fagin in several fund-raising productions of *Oliver!* at his children's public school.

However, the Eighties property boom bubble burst and, by the turn of the Nineties, Hull's £250,000 investment became an albatross around his neck. An unscrupulous accountant didn't help. "I didn't realise how bad things were until I received a buff envelope from the taxman saying I hadn't paid tax for five years. Ever since I'd started in show business, I'd had the same person to manage my money. It was someone I trusted absolutely," he said.

When I phoned him to ask what was going on, he broke down and said he was very sorry, that he had mismanaged everything. At first, I couldn't believe it. Then I decided that I could either cry my heart out and feel sorry for myself or smile and get on with it.

The house was eventually requisitioned by the Receiver to help pay a huge tax bill and in October 1994, Hull was declared bankrupt.

Savings had to be made and the villa in Portugal also went, along with the Mercedes, the Bentley and the children's private education. A few weeks later, his wife Cher went back to Australia with the children. Rod Hull had hit rock bottom. A friend who worked at the National Trust offered Hull a dilapidated two-bedroom 1810 brick cottage



Hull with Emu, the aggressive blue and yellow bird who made him a household name

near Fye in East Sussex. In 1997 he told the *Daily Mail*:

I could live cheaply if I renovated it. I have a much simpler life which I wish I'd discovered long ago. I've written a book of poems (*The Reluctant Poet*) and a novel and I sit in front of a log fire listening to classical music. I'm much more content than I've been for a long time. It's perhaps only when you've gone through what I have gone through that you find true values. It's nothing to do with money, which doesn't buy you happiness. I think I had to go all the way down before I could find this lovely way of life. I just want to meet outgoing. Although I still enjoy performing, I've no more desire to be a success.

Hull received regular visits from his friend Spike Milligan, a near neighbour, enjoyed his beekeeping and played boules for his local pub team. Chainsmoking a pipe, he remained the optimist to the end. In

late 1997, Hull was indeed discharged from bankruptcy and enjoyed something of a revival.

He turned on the Christmas Lights in Leeds and had a successful run in Windsor as Wishee Washee in *Aladdin*. A Rod Hull lookalike became the butt of a running joke of the alternative comedians Stewart Lee and Richard Herring on their show *Fist of Fun*. The real Rod Hull appeared in an episode of the BBC2 series to confront Kevin Eldon, his impersonator. Lee and Herring even tried to pull his tufty ginger hair off, to no avail.

Last year, during a feature on GMTV about children's favourites from the Seventies, Rod Hull and his startling sidekick Emu reprised their mauling act and attacked the show's presenter Lorraine Kelly as

they had Michael Parkinson. Keith Harris and Orville were the bemused bystanders this time.

In February this year, the Conservative Party made an ill-advised attempt to enlist his services, along with those of Jim Davidson. "I'm a Eurosceptic," admitted Hull. "But when it comes to politics, I'm not a member of the Conservative Party and I'm not a fan of William Hague. He doesn't have the drive and vision and he's not showbiz enough for my liking."

PIERRE PERRONE

Rod Hull, television entertainer: born Isle of Sheppey, Kent 13 August 1935; twice married (two sons, three daughters, one step-daughter); died Winchester, East Sussex 17 March 1999.

Hideo Itokawa

ONE OF Japan's most lovable eccentrics was a multi-talented aeronautical engineer, Hideo Itokawa. He was a leading figure in the research into and development of the Japanese space programme and was popularly known as "The Father of the Space Rocket".

Like many mathematicians and scientists, he was a passionate lover of the arts, and was a gifted musician who gave professional performances on the cello. He also played the violin, and even invented his own type of instrument. He adored opera, drama and classical ballet, a discipline he revered so much that he began taking lessons in it at the advanced age of 60.

As an aeronautical engineer, Itokawa was best known for his wartime work in the production of fighter planes. When he was just a schoolboy, he had been deeply impressed by Charles Lindbergh's feat in making a non-stop flight from New York to Paris in the Spirit of St Louis in 1927. From then on, Itokawa was determined to build planes.

He attended Tokyo University, and on graduation, joined what was then known as the Nakajima Airplane Company (now Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd). In those days, Japan was one of the world leaders in aircraft construction, and with the outbreak of war in the Pacific in 1941, production was quickly stepped up. Itokawa helped to design the "Hayabusa" fighter plane, the equal of the better-known "Zeroes" (Zero fighters) made by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, whose maximum range was 420 nautical miles, considered an outstanding achievement. The Zero was used towards the end of the war in the Kamikaze Special Attack Force on suicide missions against the American fleet.

Itokawa, however, was totally opposed to the kamikaze programme. He detested the idea of using men as death-dealing human robots. Instead, he proposed a pilotless aeroplane missile, like the Nazi "buzz bombs". But his blueprint of the Hayabusa remained in production.

With the end of the war, the Americans proceeded with the wholesale dismantling of Japanese aircraft factories. Even Tokyo University's aeronautical department was forced to shut down. The scientists had to turn their skills to other ends, and Itokawa spent several years devising machines for medical purposes.

His abilities in these fields became well known, and he was invited in 1953 to deliver a lecture on his methods in the School of Medicine at Chicago University. While there, he investigated the department's library, and discovered a thesis with the title: "What will happen if a human being is able to fly into space?" He realised that space flight must be an important part of America's plans, and decided that Japan should get in on the act.

Two years later, he devised the first Japanese solid-propellant fuel rocket, nicknamed the "Pencil Rocket". It was only 23cm in length and was the first step in an increasingly ambitious programme, followed by a "Baby Rocket", the "Kappa" and the "Lambda" models.

In 1964, the Tokyo University Institute of Space and Aeronautical Science (ISAS) was established with Itokawa in charge, and in the same year a Lambda rocket reached a height of 1,000km. In 1970, Itokawa supervised an experimental satellite, the "Osuni", making Japan the fourth country to achieve satellite launch capability. ISAS in 1981 became the co-ordinating research centre independent of Tokyo University.

When Itokawa started ballet lessons in 1973, pictures of him at the barre began to appear in magazines. He was often shown surrounded by an adoring corps de ballet. His great moment came five years later when, at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo, he appeared in Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, as Romeo's father. The audience was gobsmacked at the sight of their famous scientist footing it with young dancers a third of his age. A perfect example of the marriage of science and the arts.

JAMES KIRKUP

Hideo Itokawa, aeronautical engineer: born Tokyo 1913; died Nagano, Japan 21 February 1999.

Stanley Jones

WILLIAM HAZLITT was perhaps the greatest reporter that ever lived. His mind was wide-ranging, his sympathies liberal, and it is fitting that his prime exponent should have been Stanley Jones.

It was said of Jones that, if you asked him, for example, where Hazlitt was at 6pm on 2 May 1812, he would be able instantly to reply that the author was at Charles Lamb's talking to Wordsworth about Tasso's influence on Spenser. Such specificity may indicate the reputed scholarship of the former Reader in French Language and Literature at Glasgow University. To a wider audience, Stanley Jones may not have been a familiar name, but his single published volume, *Hazlitt, a Life from Winterson to Frith Street* (1989), was a popular success.

Jones was born to a Welsh-speaking nonconformist family. His father was a carpenter employed in industrial processes, and the young Stanley had to make his way through scholarships. His interest in Hazlitt arose, he said, when a Hazlitt essay happened to be the prescribed text the year he became "proud little" Junior School Fives Champion. He arrived at University College, Cardiff, where English was his primary interest. However, looking impossibly at the book, he would say: "Do you blame me?" when he spoke of being attracted at the age of 20 by the prospect of studying for a year in Paris.

It was when in Paris again, in 1939, that he met a young Canadian

violinist called Dorothea McLaughlin. The Second World War interrupted both his studies and his courtship. He spent the duration mostly in Salisbury, attached to the Intelligence Corps. Stanley resumed his doctoral research, a study of Proust, at Cambridge, but managed to second himself to McGill University for the purpose of marrying Dorothea and bringing her back to England as a British citizen.

Neither Stanley nor his wife wanted to go to Glasgow, which was uncharted territory, but Professor Alan Boase appointed him to a full lectureship in 1947, when such permanent posts were rare. The Joneses remained in Glasgow for the rest of Stanley's life, and brought up three daughters. In his amiable way, Stanley accompanied Dorothea, a cradle Catholic, to Mass each Sunday, and eventually joined her church. That a lifelong nonconformist should, in his last decade, become a Roman Catholic was only part of the enigma surrounding Stanley Jones.

When a brash post-structuralist gave an inaccurate talk on Joyce, Jones asked a colleague sitting near him for a text of *Ulysses*, unerringly turned to the relevant page, and - with characteristic urbanity - demolished the speaker's argument. He was a keen opera-goer, and knew the original Italian from which the libretti had - not always satisfactorily - been translated.

It is a mystery that, with his range of scholarship, Jones chose



only to publish on Hazlitt, and that from the vantage-point of a Department of French. There is no doubt that this caused some consternation in his university. When Jones was found in another department lecturing on his favourite author, an elderly Professor of English was heard to exclaim, "This is impugning our departmental integrity!" Certainly Jones was never accorded the Chair which his erudition warranted.

His final years were warped by the advance of the rheumatoid arthritis that eventually killed him. He was industrious to the end. Friends would receive notes from hospital, written painfully on the obverse of old menus, saying how the leisure of retirement had eluded him.

Ask him where Hazlitt was at 6pm on 2 May 1812, and he would tell you he was at Charles Lamb's talking to Wordsworth about Tasso

"However, life is still full of interest; it would be dreadful to be solicited by nothing at all."

Apart from his biography of Hazlitt, Jones contributed some 50 articles and notes to learned journals. Many of these contain material not to be found in his life of Hazlitt, or, if found there, only in a condensed form. For example, his *WD. Thomas Memorial Lecture* of 1981 (published as *The Second Mrs Hazlitt*, 1982) gives an account of the research methods employed in ascertaining the background of the second Mrs Hazlitt, Isabella Bridge-water, née Shaw. These are as astonishing as the biographical detail to which they led. It is to be hoped that a university press will bring such dispersed materials together

in a single book. This would show, beyond doubt, that Stanley Jones was not only the godfather of contemporary Hazlitt studies but also among the most resourceful scholars of his time.

PHILIP HOBBSBAUM

No one knew more about the life and works of Hazlitt than Stanley Jones, writes Duncan Wu. But there was nothing dry about him. Stanley combined his passion for things Hazlittian with an equal love for those things which once inspired his hero: good theatre, good wine, good music, and good company.

He had a seemingly indefatigable knowledge of his subject. Ask him how Hazlitt spent his brief time in Glasgow, who he met and what he did, and Stanley would know, usually without consulting his notes. He would astonish by producing such details as how much Hazlitt had spent on his lunch on a particular day. This would be an impressive enough trick in the case of writers whose lives are well documented, but it was staggering in the case of Hazlitt, of whom so little is recorded.

I came to know Stanley during the three-year period of my editing of Hazlitt's selected writings, for a new edition published earlier this year. All scholarly paths I discovered led to his door. It was opened without hesitation. In truth, he should have produced the edition, as he had been examining the extant manuscripts for decades before I

began work. On visiting libraries in America, Canada and the United Kingdom, I always found that Stanley had been there before me.

My final visit to him was shortly before the launch party for my edition. He showed me his collection of photographs of the places in France where Hazlitt had once stayed. He had found, often with the minimum of evidence, Hazlitt's lodgings in the depths of the French countryside, only years, or in one case months, before their demolition. Those photographs comprise important pieces of scholarly evidence in themselves.

His biography of Hazlitt is a milestone in literary studies. Stanley Jones was the first to tell the world about the family from which Hazlitt's second wife came, and provided a vast amount of new evidence about Sarah Walker (with whom Hazlitt fell disastrously in love). He opened up new avenues of research into Hazlitt's relations with other journalists of the day, such as Theodore Hook, Leigh Hunt, and William Gifford. His work has set the agenda for Hazlitt studies for many years to come.

Stanley Llewellyn Jones, French and English scholar: born Swansea 2 March 1916; Lecturer in French Language and Literature, Glasgow University 1947-78; Reader 1978-81; married 1946 Dorothea McLaughlin (three daughters); died Glasgow 11 March 1999.



Quaile: ramrod figure

BARBARA QUAILE was, as Barbara Renton, the youngest Scottish hospital matron at 34, and went on to crown her career as matron of Scotland's leading hospital, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary (RtE). Then, just three and a half years later, at the age of 38, she left to marry - and become a member of the Western Region Hospitals Board.

Renton was a typical matron. A trim, ramrod figure with steely eyes, she was in charge of all - maids and kitchen staff as well as nurses - and whenever she went on her rounds

nurses trembled, for she noticed everything. A broken thermometer brought a lecture which so terrified a nurse who damaged a syringe that she went to Boots and spent a considerable portion of her monthly salary on a replacement so she did not have to report the loss.

Yet Renton introduced many welcome changes. More domestic help in wards, porters to take patients to theatre and X-rays, student nurses relieved of non-nursing duties. She was in favour of male nurses, thought senior staff should be al-

lowed to live out and was a constant advocate of improvements in living conditions for nurses.

She was the second child of an Edinburgh solicitor, David Renton, and a mother who was a member of the Sandeman port family. She entered nurse training at the RtE in 1927. On qualifying she worked at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, and obtained the diploma of nursing at the University. She returned to Scotland as assistant matron at the Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion at the RtE.

With the outbreak of the Second World War a 2,000-bed emergency hospital was created at the Bangour Village hospital, near Livingston, and Renton was appointed its matron. In 1945, she was appointed matron of the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow.

In the wider politics of her profession, Renton was a member of the General Nursing Council for Scotland, became secretary and then president of the Association of Scottish Hospital Matrons and served on the Scottish Board of the Royal College of Nursing. From

1944 to 1948 she served on the Boards Reconstruction Committee which reported to the parent committee in London looking at the post-war future of nursing.

In 1955 Renton returned to the RtE as Lady Superintendent. And then, on linen inventory day, came the surprise announcement - the Lady Superintendent had become engaged and was leaving to marry a Glasgow stockbroker, Kenneth Quaile. There were some errors in the linen count that day.

Barbara Quaile was a music en-

thusiast and a member of Milngavie Music Club. She painted in oils until she developed an allergy to the paints, when she turned to watercolours. An inspiring leader and a disciplinarian who expected perfection, she also had a charming and gracious manner.

LAURENCE DOPSON

Ida Barbara Helen Renton, nurse and matron: born Edinburgh 28 March 1906; OBE 1958; married 1953 Kenneth Quaile (died 1975); died Glasgow 15 February 1999.

هكذا من الأصل

THE FRIDAY REVIEW
The Independent 19 March 1999

Hideo
Itokawa

Lee Falk

"LOTHAR! WE'RE here! Another dimension!" cried Mandrake the Magician without moving his lips. "A world entirely different from our own!" Lothar grinned, holding hard to his fez. "Well, anyhow, it didn't hurt!"

Mandrake the Magician, considered by some to be the first superhero in the comics, wore an odd costume in comparison with the four-years-younger Superman: a shiny top hat large enough to hold a spare rabbit, a low-cut waistcoat to expose his celluloid dick, a flowing purple cloak, an evening suit with tails, and shiny patent leather pointy shoes. His partner Lothar, a muscle-bound grown-up Robin, wearing blue shorts and a semi-strapped leopardskin blouse, was the he-man half of the act: he wore no shoes at all. Lothar was the dethroned king of an African tribe.

When Mandrake made his comic-book debut in the cleverly titled *Magic Comics* no 1 in August 1933, the editor, G. White the Wizard ("Uncle George to you!"), greeted his young readers from his 'Wizard's Tower in Washington Square, Philadelphia. "As towers go, it overflows every other tower you ever saw. It's the north-eastern turret of Mandrake's castle on the south-western corner of our Magic Square. Of course, Mandrake has a castle, though he's not often in it, being so busy adventuring, but he likes to have a resident wizard around in case anything comes up."

Mandrake, of no fixed Christian name, first appeared in a daily newspaper strip on 11 June 1934. Brylcreemed hair never to be disturbed, Ronald Colman moustache neatly pointed, lighting a fresh cigarette that would never ash, and strutting a walking-stick that doubled as a magic wand when required. Modelled on the theatrical conjurers that the young Lee Falk, his creator, worshipped in his boyhood, Mandrake soon used his magical abilities to fight crime, in harness with his partner.

The strip may now be seen as a true pioneer of race equality. Perhaps because Lothar had been a king, Mandrake treated him as an equal at all times, and his speech balloons were never disgraced with the kind of parody dialogue which today's readers find so offensive in certain of yesterday's comics and movies.

Leon Falk, known as Lee to his chums, was born in St. Louis, Missouri. There seems to be some confusion over the actual year: an encyclopedia of comics gives it as 1905, but other sources say he was 87 when he died. Falk was a natural, born writer. As soon as he entered high school he began contributing to the college newspaper: poems, articles, stories, all flowed from his pen. After graduating from the University of Missouri he got a job as a copywriter for a St. Louis advertising agency. Here he befriended one of the staff artists, Philip Davis, and in time the two were to form a partnership in the production of Mandrake the Magician.

Falk spent a while in local radio as both a producer and a scriptwriter,

then took time off to visit New York with the rough artwork for Mandrake. No mean artist himself, Falk had sketched the first few strips as samples. King Features, the top newspaper strip syndicate, showed interest, but wanted better drawings. Rushing home, Falk grabbed Davis and in a few days the polished-up strips were sent to King. They accepted.

Originally Mandrake was the perfect, and perfectly impossible, magician. He could do absolutely anything Falk could dream up: shrink in size, expand to giant proportions, conjure up an instant lunch, vanish from view and reappear on the other side of the world. His first opposition came from the Cobra, a sinister, hooded black-magician whose aim was to rule the world. He reckoned without Mandrake's magic. Wonderful stuff to delight young readers, of course, but certain Christian bodies objected. They did not like miracles being performed by magic. Falk quickly reduced his hero's powers to hypnosis alone. From then on a gesture

Mandrake the Magician was considered by some to be the first comic superhero. He predated Superman by four years

of Mandrake's elegant hands would cloud a man's mind so that the victim would totally believe that what he thought he saw was true. There is an answer to every problem, especially if you draw comics.

On the distaff side, Mandrake met Princess Nardia of Cockaigne and duly fell in love despite the fact that she wanted to kill him. It seems Mandrake was warring with her bad brother Segrid at the time, but once that matter was magically sorted, the way was clear for romance, despite the many beauties that our conjuror would encounter in his extremely long and still continuing career.

Phil Davis, working with his wife Martha, drew the series until he died in 1964. She continued womanfully on her own for a while, then the pen was passed to Harold Fredericks, who signed himself simply Fred. Mandrake's operations were now headquartered in the Fortress of Xanadu, but otherwise the magic proceeded as before.

Mandrake entered the movies as the star of his own 12-episode serial produced by Columbia Pictures in 1939. Warren Hull played the magician in what was billed as "A Mad Whirl of Murder and Mystery", supported by Al Kikume as Lothar. The chapter titles sound exciting: "Trap of the Wasp",



Mandrake the Magician, 1966, Falk's hero's first solo comic book

"Terror Rides the Rails" and "Unseen Monster" are typical.

But one successful strip was not enough for Falk. On 17 February 1936, King Features launched his new strip, the Phantom. Clad in a one-piece skin-tight suit with a hood, plus a tight black eye-mask which revealed a startling look of pupils, the Phantom was not just a man, he was a living legend, 400 years old. Men called him "The Ghost Who Walks", and he had been walking around the jungles of India since the 16th century. His secret: he was really Christopher Standish, latest in a long line of stalwart sons, who inherited their title and powers from the original Phantom all those hundreds of years ago.

Falk's artist for the Phantom was another friend from his home town. Ray Moore drew the simplistic but visually appealing strip until he entered the US Air Force in 1942. The Phantom was then taken over full-time by his former assistant, Wilson McCoy. Once again Hollywood called, and with the banner line "The Most Fantastic, Most Exciting Serial Ever Made", Columbia Pictures leapt into action with Tom Tyler, who once played the Mummy, billed as "America's favourite cartoon hero now on the screen!" Second-billed was Ace the Wonder Dog

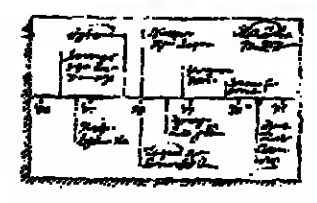
as Devil, the Phantom's four-legged friend. This was 1943, and some years later, in 1966, a full-length feature film was made of the same title.

Falk served in the Department of Secret Intelligence, a branch of the Office of War Information, during the Second World War, and later began to write and produce for the theatre. Many of his productions were staged at Nassau in the Bahamas, and he is said to have produced some 300 plays. These included *Dame May Whitty* in Emily Williams's masterpiece, *Night Must Fall*, and *Charlton Heston in Bell Book and Candle*. Falk also wrote two musical plays, *Happy Dollar* and one featuring his top comic-strip hero, *Mandrake the Magician and the Enchantress*.

In his spare time from mapping out 14 strips every week and writing and producing plays, Falk launched into a series of novels featuring his other hero, the Phantom. Small wonder then that he finally received an International award for his comic strip work at the 1971 Comics Convention in Lucerne, Italy.

DENIS GIFFORD

Leon Falk, writer and producer: born St. Louis, Missouri 1905; twice married (one son, two daughters); died New York 13 March 1999.



HISTORICAL NOTES HELENE WIGGIN

The relentless tyranny of the sink

DOWN THE ages traditional English laundry skills have always been the preserve of women. Long before the "white than white" virtues of Oxydol over Rinso wooed housewives from their copper boilers to the twin tub, there were devices trying to make the weekly wash less time-consuming and cumbersome.

The first washing machines were primitive affairs: just a barrel or bucket with a false bottom and a spigot. Heavy household linens were layered carefully into the bucket, propped by sturdy garden twigs that would carry the weight of sodden cloth, allowing the washing solution to course its way down over cuffs, collars and already dipped in lye. These were placed downwards to catch the force of the detergent. "Laying the buck" was the traditional way of letting nature pro-soak away gathered grime but the result was only as good as the lye solution used.

When Celia Fennes made her intrepid journey on horseback across Britain in the mid-17th century she saw fit to comment in her diary about the lye-making industry in the forest of Cannock Chase. She observed how the dried ferns were burned into ashes, mixed with grease and turned into lye balls. These were soaked overnight in rainwater, strained through muslin to provide the scouring liquid to be poured over the layered linens in the buck and left to soak through.

Never let it be said that Tudor or Stuart women did not take pride in pristine linen. Only the most destitute did not attempt some hand-scrubbing. Even a modest household was judged by the freshness of its linen. Whiteness was achieved by bleaching agents such as sunshine and urine. Ready-bleached fabrics were the sign of wealth and prestige, so any tricks to upgrade the whiteness of a collar were eagerly sought.

It was to the garden that the thrifty housewife resorted to find other lye solutions made from burnt hen or pigeon dung, wild flowers. Here were found the sticks and props to stretch out the linens to dry, taut in the wind and sun. Brides were presented with specially cut sticks to dry out nappies in anticipation of a happy event.

Then there was the whole process of soapmaking. The placing of the tanning yards were usually on the outskirts of a town, close to a water supply but downstream to ease the stench. Grease scraped from carcasses was rendered and boiled into a stinking lye by the soapmakers. Thrifty housewives also rendered their own version of household soap using fats mixed with traditional herbs like lavender.

The fashion for ruffs and stiff linen collars was a high laundry priority and the process of sizing and starching fabric an art in itself. There was often rivalry to

produce the most efficacious lye rinses from bran water and ground hoof-parings. Each following generation found natural means to improve their fabrics: a strained potato water to clean silk, a tealeaf rinse for linens, sugar and water to stiffen paper nylon petticoats.

The price of cleanliness could be more costly than mere chapped hands. Parish records record the deaths of young girls, drowned fetching water from well and swollen stream, scalded by burning fat or splashing of lye, young children poisoned by drinking detergent. Who knows how many backs were put out of joint by the lifting of sodden loads.

A few remaining relics of original "bucks" may be found in bijou gardens. For nearly a hundred years this monument to 19th-century endeavour ruled supreme: queen of every wash-house in the urban backyard, with broadbrimmed like some ample heaving bosom out of which churned the weekly wash flattened to a cardboard.

Washing has been one of the most relentless of household duties. Homespun hempen cloth was heavy and tempting to ignore until ripe and fruity. The invention of mechanical "bucks" in the 20th century surely has done much to liberate women from the tyranny of the sink?

Helene Wiggins is author of *In the Heart of the Garden* (Flame, £5.99)

Court had power to grant ancillary relief

IN THE absence of express language in an arbitration clause, the court was not deprived of jurisdiction to grant ancillary relief such as a Mareva injunction in support of arbitration proceedings.

The Court of Appeal discharged an *ex parte* Mareva injunction which had been granted to the plaintiffs to protect their claim to a confidentiality fee under a retainer agreement with the defendant.

The defendant sought to challenge her father's will by bringing proceedings against other members of her family in the foreign country in which she lived. She entered into a retainer with a leading firm of lawyers in that country on the basis of a contingency fee. The beneficiaries of her father's estate agreed to settle her claim for a very large sum of money. The completion took place in London, and the money was paid into an account in Jersey.

The lawyers feared that they would not be paid their fee, and brought proceedings in England for, inter alia, a Mareva injunction over the proceeds of the settlement. They were granted an *ex parte* injunction. The retainer agreement contained an English law and London arbitration clause. The defendant applied to have the Mareva injunction discharged and to stay the proceedings for arbitration. She argued that the court lacked all jurisdiction because the parties had agreed that all disputes deriving from their agreement, including a dispute relating to such an ancillary remedy, should be with the exclusive jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal, and that in

FRIDAY LAW REPORT 19 MARCH 1999

Re Q's Estate
Queen's Bench
Division, Commercial Court (Mr Justice Rix)
12 March 1999

any event the lawyers had failed to show a real risk that she would not pay any award against her. *Nicholas Hamblen QC (Ince & Co) for the plaintiffs; Thomas Benzel (Peters & Peters) for the defendant.*

Mr Justice Rix said that section 44 of the Arbitration Act 1996 confirmed that the court had the same power of making orders in relation to arbitration proceedings about, *inter alia*, the preservation of evidence and the granting of an interim injunction as it had in relation to legal proceedings "unless otherwise agreed by the parties". It was submitted for the defendant, relying on *Mantovani v Coparelli* [1978] 2 Lloyd's Rep 63, that the parties had "otherwise agreed" because the words in the arbitration clause "any dispute deriving (from) or in connection with" the retainer agreement embraced a dispute as to the granting of a Mareva agreement.

Mantovani v Coparelli was not, however, authority for the proposition that ancillary proceedings in the courts were always a breach of an arbitration clause, merely that they were

in that particular case by reason of the wide language of the arbitration clause in question. In the absence of similar language the court was not deprived of jurisdiction to grant a Mareva injunction in support of arbitration between the parties to the proceedings.

Furthermore, the use of the word "exclusive" in the arbitration clause was merely intended to underline the general rule that substantive proceedings had to be by way of arbitration, rather than to introduce the exceptional situation where the parties were barred from ancillary proceedings in court. Had the parties wanted to exclude the right to resort to the court under section 44 of the 1996 Act for assistance in ancillary matters, they could and should have done so by more specific wording.

The court did not, therefore, lack jurisdiction to make a Mareva in the present case, but declined to do so on the merits. A plaintiff could not obtain a Mareva injunction before his cause of action had accrued. In the present case, counsel had informed the court the day before the completion of the settlement of the defendant's claim that he would be seeking an injunction, i.e. before the plaintiffs' cause of action for their contingency fee had materialised. It had been possible to grant the injunction on the following day with counsel's assurance that the completion had taken place and that nothing material had otherwise changed. That procedure, although unorthodox, was none the less valid.

KATE O'HANLON, Barrister

WORDS CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE medley, n.

straight itself compared with one's seeing that Harvester describes a pudding as "playfully studded with walnuts". How refreshing to leave

cavernous Peppers and walk to the Steine, as described by the 14-year-old Macaulay: it "is a rare medley - Generals, and Drummers, and Deserters, and bathing-women, and Peersesses, and Quakers, and masters, and mistresses, and Sailors, are taking the air perpetually in its walks." No diesel fumes for them.

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

MILLER SMITH: Dorothy, died peacefully at home, as she lived, with her family. Wife of Charles, mother of Nicholas, Caroline and Fiona, and grandmother of Emily. Funeral service at St Michael's, Chester Square, SW1, on Friday 20 March 1999, at 2.30pm for family and friends. Family flowers only but donations, if desired, to Action Against Breast Cancer, 25 Culham Science Centre, Oxfordshire OX4 2DB. Thanks giving service on Tuesday 11 May 1999 at St Michael's, Chester Square, SW1, at 11.30am. All friends invited.

WILLIS: On 16 March, suddenly after a long illness Frank, 51, formerly of the ITC. Funeral service on 24 March at St Marylebone Church, 100, Portico, Portico, London, W1. No flowers please, donations to Eden Hall Marie Curie Centre, c/o Laver, Ton and Sons Ltd, 0181-444 5753.

IN MEMORIAM

KOMENOVIC: It is one year since our dear Dusan left us. With the most tender feelings, we remember the love, support and protection he lavished upon us all his life. His devoted family.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen presents a new diamond ring to Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace. The Duke of Edinburgh, President of the Royal Society, will be the guest of honour at the Royal Society's 250th Anniversary Dinner, 19 April, at the Royal Albert Hall, London.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

BIRTHDAYS

Miss Ursula Andress, actress, 68; Sir Nigel Broomfield, former ambassador to Germany, 62; Miss Glenn Close, actress, 52; Lady Georgina Coleridge, journalist, 83; Professor Ronald Girdwood, former president, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 82; The Right Rev Ronald Gordon, former Bishop of Lambeth, 72; Mr Bryan Hildrew, former managing director, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 79; Vice-Admiral Sir Norman King, former chairman, Buckinghamshire Health Authority, 66; Sir David Lumsden, former principal, Royal Academy of Music, 71; Sir Peter Masefield, aviation authority, 85; Lord Plant of Highfield, Master, St Catherine's College, Oxford, 54; Lt-Gen Sir Alan Reay, Chief Hon Steward, Westminster Abbey, 74; Mr Philip Roth, novelist, 66; Mr Bruce Willis, actor, 44; Miss Mary Wimbush, actress, 78; Mr William Winsfield, Headmaster, Mill Hill School, 52.

ANNIVERSARIES

Births: Georges de la Tour, painter, 1593; Tobias George Smollett, physician and writer, 1721; Charles Watson Westworth, second Marquis of Rockingham, statesman, 1730; Dr David Livingstone, explorer and missionary, 1813; Johannes Josephus Herman Verhulst, composer and conductor, 1816; Sir Richard Francis Burton, scholar and explorer, 1821; Albert Pinkham Ryder, painter, 1847; William Jennings Bryan, politician, 1860;

Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev, founder of Diaghilev ballet company, 1872; Max Reger, teacher and composer, 1873; Sir John Hubert Marshall, archaeologist, 1878; Joseph Albers, abstract painter and poet, 1888.

Deaths: Thomas Killgrew, playwright, 1833; René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, explorer, murdered by his own men in Texas 1687; Thomas William Daniell, landscape painter, 1840; Mary Anning, finder of Ichthyosaurus fossil, 1847; William Henry Playfair, architect, 1857; Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow-Godenus, painter, 1868; George Richmond, painter, 1866; Antoine-Thomson d'Abbadie, explorer and scientist, 1897; Arthur James Balfour, first Earl Balfour, statesman, 1930; Edgar Rice Burroughs, novelist and creator of "Tarzan", 1950; George Gheorghe Dej, Romanian prime minister, 1965; Stephen Graham, travel writer, 1975; Faith Cuthrell Baldwin, romantic novelist, 1978; Alan Badel, actor, 1982.

On this day: the Rev John White formed the New England Company in Massachusetts Bay, 1628; the US Senate refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations Covenant, 1920; the opera *Faust* by Gounod was performed in Paris for the first time, 1859; Sydney Harbour bridge was officially opened, 1932; following an internal dispute, British parachute troops took over the Caribbean island of Anguilla, 1969; Willy Brandt and Willi Stoph, heads of West and East Germany, met for the first time

at Erfurt, 1970; during a severe gale, the 1,260-foot television mast at Emley Moor, Yorkshire, crashed to the ground, 1970; the first London performance of the musical *On the Twentieth Century* was staged, 1980.

Today is the Feast Day of St Alcmund, prince of Northumbria, St John of Panaca, St Joseph (husband of the Virgin) and St Landold.

LECTURES

National Gallery: Colin Wiggin, "Cats and Dogs (II): Constable, Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows", 1pm.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Ann Peart, "Stories in Indian Art (II)", 2pm.

Tate Gallery: Tim Marlow, "Jackson Pollock: untangling the web", 1pm. British Museum: Mike Cowell, "Science and Money", 11.30am; Paul Craddock, "Black Bronzes: the alchemist's gold", 1pm; Duncan Franklin, "Technologies of Ancient China", 2pm. Wallace Collection, London W1: "Irene Logan, 'Maïolica in the Wallace Collection'", 1pm.

DINNERS

Chester Business Club: Mr John Monks, General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, was guest of honour and principal speaker at a Chester Business Club dinner held yesterday evening at Abbots Well Hotel, Chester. Mr Martin Seed,

Club Chairman, presided. Mr Tom Hunt, Club Vice-President and Mr Boh Clough-Parker, Club Secretary, also spoke.

Durham University: Sir Robert May, Chief Government Scientific Officer, was the guest speaker at Durham University Society of Fellows 17th Annual Dinner, held yesterday at the College of St Hild and St Bede, Durham. Professor Michael Freestwich, President of the Society of Fellows, was the host. Among the guests were: Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, Vice-Chancellor and Warden, Durham University; Mr and Mrs Derek Young, the Mayor and Mayoress of Durham; The Very Rev John Arnold, Dean of Durham; and Mrs Arnold; Sir Frederick Hogg, Chairman of Northumbria Water and former Vice-Chancellor and Warden of Durham University.

COLLEGE OF LAW

The Governors of the College of Law have appointed Mr Roger Pamone to be their Chairman, in succession to Sir Derek Bradbeer.

SYNAGOGUE SERVICES

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 5.57pm. United Synagogue: 0181-243-8888. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202-2285. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-580 1063. Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 0181-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-588 2573. New London Synagogue (Ossford): 0171-528 1024.

Frank Bruno and the art of bagel making

THE FRENETIC industry of the all-night bagel shop was only brought to a halt by Frank Bruno. The shop, at the top of Brick Lane in London's East End, reaches its weekly climax at about four o'clock on Sunday morning. Because anyone going out for a bagel at that time is certain to be at least slightly interesting. Dull suburban couples, for instance, wouldn't survive the strain were one partner to suggest that "This week dear, instead of Sunday afternoon at the Harvester, why don't we go to a bagel shop at four in the morning?"

The flamboyant and colourful clientele remain constantly jovial, undisturbed by the abuse doled out by late-night curry house yobs. "Creeseem cheeeseem," screamed the campest skinhead dressed in rubber I'd ever seen. "Whack us a pair of tunas," said the hard hoke behind him. Then came a pair of coppers, and a couple who must have been to a fancy dress

party, him as Oscar Wilde and her in a 1920s Charleston outfit. If a Red Indian had come in, this queue could have earned a fortune as a Village People tribute band.

The bagel itself is a traditional Jewish roll, sweet, with a hole in the middle, filled with smoked salmon, herring or other, more genteel, fillings. In the back half of the shop, the process of making them entertains the queueing customers. Sweating, agile artists rapidly but delicately brush each bagel before swinging a tray carrying 60 of them into a huge oven, while their colleagues knead enormous blocks of dough, and everyone shouts at each other across the clattering of bagel-related accessories.

This never slows down, even during quiet periods, and you wonder whether it's an addiction; and whether, on their days off, the bagel-makers stay at home slamming their oven door shut, chucking Polos into trays, and

yelling "MORE DOUGH," at passing strangers.

In the corner, chomping on a slice of salt beef, was Douglas. Chunks of bagel were spilling through vast gaps in his teeth on to his crumbling black coat. He was Scottish and had worked on the oil rigs for several years but had to leave when he became disabled. He now lives in a homeless person's unit. "Usually ah come here in the afternoon," he said. "Ah get here at four; and stay until midnight. I've nothing else to do, have I? They always see me all right for bagels."

But today was different. He was here at night, to listen to the radio commentary of the fight at Madison Square Garden between Holyfield and Lewis. In the moments before it began he was joined by Reg, who'd come off a night shift on the Underground, and the three of us moved as close as we could to the crackly sound of Frank Bruno imparting his expert analysis.

"Lewis is making this look so

MARK STEEL



ON
LOCATION

easy, he's a dangerous dude," said Frank. "He's walking it," he enthused after each round. "He's walking it," said Reg and Douglas to everyone who asked. "He's scoring so many points with his jabs," said Bruno. "He's scoring so many points with his jabs," said the little man serving cheesecake one minute later, to a pair of lads on their way home from a rave.

Once every two rounds, the tempo of commentary would increase, along with a surge of

ringside yelling. We'd all stretch an inch nearer to the radio, and at that moment the woman in the corner would turn on the bread-slicing machine, which clattered like a fruit machine coughing out a jackpot - you could shut your eyes and imagine you were in a steelworks.

"Pleeeeeease, can't you do it between rounds," we'd plead, but she just looked puzzled and carried on.

The fight ended. "Lewis is easily the champion," said Frank, and everyone agreed. But we hadn't seen a thing; we only had Frank's word for it. For all we knew, Holyfield had spent the whole fight pinging Lewis's nose with an elastic band, while Lewis yelled, "Ow, stop it, that hurts."

"It was much closer than you seem to think," said a British journalist to Bruno. "Rubbish," shouted Reg and Douglas. And then the verdict: the infamous draw. "Well they were watching a different fight to me," screeched the little man behind the counter.

"To be fair, we didn't see it," I interjected pathetically. "We can tell by listening to the radio," spat Douglas.

But now Bruno was on a roll. It was disgraceful, scandalous, shameful, appalling. To break up the adjectives, he actually said "know what I mean". And then he went for a big finish. "That Holyfield is a man who believes in God. So be must look in the mirror and say to himself, 'as night is night and day is day. Lord, I know I lost that fight'."

Suddenly the regular kiedank-kiedank of trays in ovens was interrupted. "That Bruno," screamed an Italian baker, slamming down the tray of bagels he was brushing with oil. "He talk a-nothing but aheest!"

And he sat down for the first time in at least two hours and howled with laughter in an Italian accent. This brought the whole bagel-making process to a halt, creating a log-jam of dough and stacked-up trays. And it was all a touch ironic.

Because the last time British people thought there was about to be a British world heavyweight champion was just before Bruno fought Tyson. Then Bruno was dumped on to the floor in the third round, and we all suddenly thought, how did we fool ourselves? This was Iron Savage Penitentiary Terminator Crocodile Tyson - against Buttons from Cinderella.

Which leads me to the sad declaration that this was the last of these visits, as I'm supposed to be writing a book and a radio series, both of which take bloody ages. But I would like to thank this newspaper for giving me the chance to write these pieces, and the readers who've read them.

What they've confirmed for me is that while the class divisions which shape our society are enormously complex, give or take a few grey areas and exceptions, working-class people are creative, positive, amiable, humble and unselfish. And the rich are ignorant pigs. Ta ra.

A university library needs funds. What to do? Sell the books, of course. By Oliver Swanton

Lost pages of history

Books were Charles Turner's life. Friends of the eccentric senior civil servant recall how he often went without life's luxuries, including winter coats, to buy them. His collection of early maths books and manuscripts covered every conceivable surface in his top-floor flat in Wimbledon, London. "There was no dining-room or lounge," remembers David Ingram, a retired professor, who admired the books as a boy. "The whole flat seemed to be an extended part of his library."

"I was always rather surprised by the frugal nature of his life. There was little cutlery in his flat and he didn't seem to eat much. It was a rather austere existence."

Over 50 years Turner diligently amassed 1,100 works, including eight from Newton's own library. "It gave one a sense of being part of the march of time," says Ingram. "Handling the very books great mathematicians like Newton and Galileo had once owned was magical. To discover their scribbled notes and additions to calculations truly brought the subject alive."

To understand mathematics there's no substitute for reading the words of the great masters, says David Singmaster, a retired professor. "Reproductions and facsimiles do not encourage a personal connection with the past. And, even if they did, no matter what people say these things just aren't being digitised: it's expensive, it takes a long time and nobody's got any money."

In 1968, Turner determined to leave his rare and valuable collection to future generations. He wanted his act of benevolence to help build the prestige of "a university library that had not had the opportunity or good fortune to acquire such an important special collection", he told his friend, Keele University, where Ingram taught physics, was just the kind of red-brick institution Turner had in mind. In appreciation Keele awarded Turner an honorary degree and organised a handing-over ceremony at which Princess Margaret, then chancellor of the university, thanked him in person.

Thirty years later, Keele University has unceremoniously sold the Turner Collection for £1m. After years of budget cuts they needed funds to invest in library materials. Contrary to the university's statement last November, the books are likely to leave the country: the London book dealer Simon Finch, one of at least three dealers known to be associated with the sale, has applied for several export licences.

The university's decision to sell was far from clear-cut. Debate in academic senate during June last year was heated. By a slim majority representatives voted not to sell. Staff at Keele thought that was the end of the matter but on 26 June the university's smaller ruling council - responsible, together with the Vice-Chancellor for day-to-day management - made a rare and controversial decision to ignore the will of senate on a major issue. A commercial offer of £1m was already on the table. Within 10 days the books had been removed from the library.

The books' likely destination is the United States, where there is massive demand for early works - and where the British antiquarian book dealer Simon Finch has done lucrative business in the past. The Internet revolution has made millions of many computer geeks almost



Rare books such as these fetch high prices in the United States where there is massive demand for early works. *Glynn Griffiths*

overnight. With high disposable incomes and a natural interest in all things mathematical they're driving the price of early works to unprecedented levels: a first edition of Newton's *Principia Mathematica* recently went for \$300,000 (£185,000) at auction in New York, while an Archimedes manuscript fetched \$2.2m last October.

The secrecy of the sale of the Turner collection is surpassed only by the secrecy surrounding the export of works of art. The Department for Culture would neither confirm nor deny that applications for export licences had been made or granted. Furthermore, when the Shadow culture secretary, Peter Ainsworth, tabled a written question in the House of Commons, it became clear that the Government does not know the "exact present location" of the Turner Collection.

"It is disgraceful and astonishing that an important collection of this kind can simply disappear," says Ainsworth. "There is an air of mystery surrounding the export of collections and works of art that needs to be dispelled. This is far from an isolated case and it is clear that reform is of great urgency."



Princess Margaret formally receives Charles Turner's bequest

Critics believe that the Turner Collection was undersold - it included all three editions of Newton's *Principia* and a copy of Galileo's *Il Saggiatore*... of 1632, which Galileo had extensively annotated. "Newton's books alone," asserts Singmaster, "could have fetched £1m at auction." Senior academics at Keele, with the support of four local MPs, are demanding an internal enquiry into the affair.

A spokesperson for the university, however, maintains that the sale price was a fair one. They declined to specify which, if any, major national antiquarian book-selling company, international firm of auctioneers or other specialists the university might have consulted for advice and valuations. The London Mathematical Society, the British Society for the History of Mathematics, the British Society for the History of Science and the British Library all maintain that they were not consulted about the sale.

Keele stands by its decision to sell. Turner attached no strings to his gift, says a spokesperson. The collection was theirs to sell and in doing so they have broken no laws: besides, they say, the books were

little-used and far from unique. A statement from the university said: "The university received assurances at the point of sale that the collection would remain intact and in Britain and available to scholars."

Senior academics at Keele, with the support of four local MPs, will this week demand an internal enquiry into the affair. The British Library has already demanded (and obtained) the return of a £10,000 grant made to the university for re-binding the books. Meanwhile, the chairman of the Museums & Galleries Commission, James Joll, has called for urgent reform of the "unsatisfactory legal status" of collections and objects donated to public bodies. Universities, he added, cannot simply regard such collections as private assets to be sold off at will to the highest bidder.

At least three book dealers have been associated with the sale - Robert Downie, Daniel McDowell and Simon Finch. No written assurances about the collection's destiny were made. Keele would not comment on whether it believed conditions of sale had been breached, or whether it plans to act to stop the books leaving Britain. It is not the university's decision to sell per se that has angered critics, but that the collection was sold to a dealer, not another British public institution, to ensure that the collection remained part of the nation's stock of wealth - and accessible by scholars.

Keele University council minutes of 28 June record that the sale was agreed in principle, "following further investigations of the options". Yet within 10 days the books had been removed from library shelves. The university maintains the books were offered to other public bodies, but declines to specify which.

Oxford University, Cambridge University, the Royal Society, the Royal Astronomical Society and the British Library all have an interest

in early mathematical works. Keele had not offered the collection, in part or whole, to them.

Dr David McKitterick, chief librarian at Trinity College, Cambridge, where Newton was an undergraduate, says: "£1m would not have been an impossible sum to find. Some libraries would have worked extremely hard to pay."

Of further concern is the disappearance from Keele University library of an additional 200 books, known as the With Turner Collection. The fact that the supplementary collection might be included in the sale is not mentioned in minutes of either the university's senate or its council. The books were never part of the Turner bequest, but were bought with public funds and intended for the use of Keele staff and students.

At least one of the books, complete with Keele University Library's embossed stamp, has surfaced in New York, purchased on the Internet from Robert Downie. Downie, a graduate of Keele who has done regular business with the university, maintains that the With Turner Collection was "all part of the arrangement of the sale".

Keele is not the first university to cash in. Despite widespread protests the University of Manchester sold 97 magnificent medieval and Renaissance books and manuscripts in April 1988. Although the books - which fetched £1,833,780 at Sotheby's - were duplicates, Lord Strabolgi, Labour arts spokesman at the time, revealed that in every case the university had chosen to sell the better copy of each pair held. MPs, peers and academics warned that the university was setting a dangerous precedent.

The only good thing to come out of the sale is that the culture secretary, Chris Smith, has undertaken to review the export laws. Sadly, it may be too late for Charles Turner's precious legacy.

In defence of civil divorce

What could be more miserable than an acrimonious marriage? By Sophie Radice

THIS WEEK we heard the doom-laden news that divorce was a terrible threat to children. Couples, according to Tory leader William Hague, should stay together. Divorce is altogether too easy, and marriage really is the ideal.

Coming from a family of three generations of official marital breakdown (grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles and my sister and I have all been divorced), I have to protest against the notion that divorce is the greatest social problem faced by our children. That dubious prize must go to parental unhappiness in all its forms. We all know about the emotional pain of divorce, the loss of hope for the parents and the confusion for the children, because it is a public admission of failure that the morally smug can point the finger at. But what of the kind of insidious acrimony that is buried deep within the stay-together-for-the-sake-of-the-children families?

There are no statistics, reports or surveys on the pervasive long-term effect on children of terminally unhappy parents, because it is impossible to gauge. How can you judge the disadvantages of a particular marriage? It is much easier to judge the general disadvantage of divorce.

In his family law policy, Lord Irvine of Lairg seeks to offer counselling to married couples, and the Government pledges to spend £3m on grants to marriage support and research agencies. Although Lord Irvine realises that divorce is never an easy option, he also seems to understand that some marital problems are insurmountable. Sensibly, he wants couples to turn to mediation as a much healthier and cheaper option than litigation. "Scoring points off each other and paying lawyers to do it comes out of money

are concerned. He sobered up and realised how much he has missed out. He takes them every weekend and picks them up from school and brings them home a couple of times a week. He now has the experience of being responsible for the children over quite long periods of time.

"We go to all parents' evenings and school events together and I know the children are secure in the fact that we are utterly committed to them. His involvement is far more regular and organised and I am much happier because I no longer feel like a doormat."

I would argue that civilised splits, which have the uncanny knack of making the parents concentrate their efforts on the welfare of their children, are actually less rare than one thinks. As the terrifyingly perfect Penelope Leach says: "Nobody would bring a child into the world intending to face him with such disruption but, if you do not have the power to prevent it, you do have the power to see him through it, so don't waste unnecessary energy on feeling that you have failed him. You will only have done so if, between you, he loses out on love."

My vast family of step-sisters, half-brothers, step-step-aunts and adopted cousins is probably as far removed from the "Janet and John" ideal of the small unbroken family unit as you can get. My Gran (who may well have started the whole thing off by leaving my grandfather in amazement at family gatherings and says: "My family is the most extraordinary mix of race, religion and class that I have ever seen.")

Part of her loves to rebel against the claustrophobic social mores of her family, who no doubt disapproved when she fell in love with



Sophie Radice with her children

Neville Elder

that should go towards building new lives and the lives of children."

His policy seems to recognise that people will still split up and that no amount of disapproval from the long-term married is going to change that. What is important is not to concentrate on making divorcing couples feel like bad parents, but to help them make arrangements that will allow them to be good parents despite the circumstances.

And it is possible. Katey Robertson has a son and a daughter aged four and seven. She split up with her husband a couple of years ago because she found it impossible to live with his temper, heavy drinking and his willingness to leave all of the caring of the children to her. "I was utterly miserable and he hated living with me, but as a couple living apart we are doing really well."

"My leaving gave my ex-husband a real shock as far as the children

another man all that time ago. She is best friends with her ex-daughter-in-law, as well as being a source of love and support not only to her own grandchildren, but to her step-daughter's daughter, her stepson's son and her stepson's adopted son's ex-wife - to name but a few. It is a messy tribe. Within our family there is a lot of evidence that within marriage (sorry, Gran) shit happens.

Having said all this, the state of marriage remains an ideal. My parents both remarried very happily and last year I married a man who is also a product of two generations of divorce. When the best man - my new brother-in-law (himself recently divorced) - got up to make a speech, he looked around at the guests, and instead of muttering something about hope over experience, sighed and opened his speech with: "Did you know that 10 out of 10 divorces start with marriage?" Quite.

SCIENCE

The memory of molecules

Can molecules communicate with each other, exchanging information without being in physical contact? French biologist Jacques Benveniste believes so, but his scientific peers are still sceptical. By Lionel Milgrom

Jacques Benveniste was once considered to be one of France's most respected biologists, until he was cast adrift from the scientific mainstream. His downfall began in 1988 when he infuriated the scientific community with experimental results which he took as evidence to suggest that water has a memory. His ideas were seized upon by homeopaths keen to find support for their theories on highly diluted medicines, but were condemned by scientific purists. Now, Benveniste believes he has evidence to suggest that it may one day be possible to transmit the curative power of life-saving drugs around the world - via the Internet.

It sounds like science fiction and Benveniste will have a hard time convincing a deeply sceptical world that he is right. Nevertheless, he began his campaign last week when he announced the latest research to come out of his Digital Biology Laboratory near Paris, to a packed audience of scientists at the Phipps Lecture Theatre at Cambridge University's Cavendish Physics Laboratory. Benveniste suggested that the specific effects of biologically active molecules such as adrenalin, nicotine and caffeine, and the immunological signatures of viruses and bacteria, can be recorded and digitised using a computer sound-card. A keystroke later, and these signals can be winging their way across the globe, courtesy of the Internet. Biological systems far away from their activating molecules can then - he suggested - be triggered simply by playing back the recordings.

Most scientists have dismissed Benveniste as being on the fringe, although there were some famous names in the audience last week, including Sir Andrew Huxley, Nobel laureate and past president of the Royal Society, and the physicist Professor Brian Josephson, also a Nobel laureate. Benveniste started by asking some apparently childish questions. If molecules could talk, what would they sound like? More specifically, can we eavesdrop on their conversations, record them, and play them back? The answer to these last three questions is, according to Benveniste, a resounding "Oui!" He further suggested that these "recordings" can make molecules respond in the same way as they do when they react. Contradicting the way biologists think biochemical reactions occur, he claims molecules do not have to be in close proximity to affect each other. "It's like listening to Pavarotti or Elton John," Benveniste explained. "We hear the sound and experience emotions, whether they're live or on CD."

For example, anger produces adrenalin. When adrenalin molecules bind to their receptor sites, they set off a string of biological events that, among other things, make blood vessels contract. Biologists say that adrenalin is acting as a molecular signalling device but, Benveniste asks, what is the real nature of the signal? And how come the adrenalin molecules specifically target their receptors and no others, at



Jacques Benveniste: many say his ideas are heretical and misguided

incredible speed? According to Benveniste, if the cause of such biochemical events were simply due to random collisions between adrenalin molecules and their receptors (the currently accepted theory of molecular signalling), then it should take longer than it does to get angry. Benveniste became the *bête noire* of the French scientific establishment back in 1988, when a paper he had published in the science journal *Nature* was later rubbished by the then editor, Sir John Maddox, and a team that included a professional magician, James Randi. With an international group of scientists from Canada, France, Israel and Italy, Benveniste had claimed that vigorously shaking water solutions of an antibody could evoke a biological response, even when that antibody was diluted out of existence. Non-agitated solutions produced little or no effect. *Nature* said that the results of the experiment that produced the "ghostly antibodies" were, frankly, unbelievable. The journal itself came in for criticism for publishing the paper in the first place.

In his *Nature* paper, Benveniste reasoned that the effect of dilution and agitation pointed to transmission of biological information via some molecular organisation going on in water. This "memory of water" effect, as it was later known, proved

Benveniste's academic undoing. For while the referees of his *Nature* paper could not fault Benveniste's experimental procedures, they could not understand his results. How, they asked, can a biological system respond to an antigen when no molecules of it can be detected in solution? It goes against the accepted "lock-and-key" principle, which states that molecules must be

deterred, he and his now-depleted research team somehow continued to investigate the biological effects of agitated, highly dilute solutions. The latest results are, for biologists, even more incredible than those in the 1988 *Nature* paper. Physicists, however, should have less of a problem as their discipline is based on fields (eg gravitational, electromagnetic) which have well-established

Benveniste believes that water can memorise and amplify the signals of molecules that have been diluted out of existence

in contact and structurally match before information can be exchanged. Such thinking has dominated the biological sciences for more than four decades, and is itself rooted in the views of the 17th-century French philosopher René Descartes.

Nature's attempted debunking exercise failed to find evidence of fraud, but concluded that Benveniste's research was essentially unreplicable, a claim he has always denied. From being a respected figure in the French biological establishment, Benveniste was pilloried, losing his government funding and his laboratory. Un-

published long-range effects. If Benveniste's claims prove to be true - which is far from certain - they could have profound consequences, not least for medical diagnostics. Benveniste's explanation starts innocuously enough with a musical analogy. Two vibrating strings close together in frequency will produce a "beat". The length of this beat increases as the two frequencies approach each other. Eventually, when they are the same, the beat disappears. This is the way musicians tune their instruments, and Benveniste uses the analogy to explain his water-memory theory. Thus, all

molecules are made from atoms which are constantly vibrating and emitting infrared radiation in a highly complex manner. These infrared vibrations have been detected for years by scientists, and are a vital part of their armoury of methods for identifying molecules.

However, precisely because of the complexity of their infrared vibrations, molecules also produce much lower "beat" frequencies. It turns out that these beats are within the human audible range (20 to 20,000 Hertz) and are specific for every different molecule. Thus, as well as radiating in the infrared region, molecules also broadcast frequencies in the same range as the human voice. This is the molecular signal that Benveniste detects and records.

If molecules can broadcast, then they should also be able to receive. The specific broadcast of one molecular species will be picked up by another, "tuned" by its molecular structure to receive it. Benveniste calls this matching of broadcast with reception "co-resonance", and says it works like a radio set. Thus, when you tune your radio to, say, Classic FM, both your set and the transmitting station are vibrating at the same frequency. Twice the dial a little, and you're listening to Radio 1; different tuning, different sounds.

This, Benveniste claims, is how millions of biological molecules man-

age to communicate at the speed of light with their own corresponding molecule and no other. It also explains why minute changes in the structure of a molecule can profoundly alter its biological effect. It is not that these tiny structural changes make it a bad fit with its biological receptor (the classical lock-and-key approach). The structural modifications "detune" the molecule to its receptor. What is more, and just like radio sets and receivers, the molecules do not have to be close together for communication to take place.

So what is the function of water in all this? Benveniste explains this by pointing out that all biological reactions occur in water. The water molecules completely surround every other molecule placed among them. A single protein molecule, for example, will have a fan club of at least 10,000 admiring water molecules. And they are not just hangers-on. Benveniste believes they are the agents that in fact relay and amplify the biological signal coming from the original molecule.

It is like a CD which, by itself, cannot produce a sound but has the means to create it etched into its surface. In order for the sound to be heard, it needs to be played back through an electronic amplifier. And just as Pavarotti or Elton John is on the CD only as a "memory", so water can memorise and amplify the signals of molecules that have been dissolved and diluted out of existence. The molecules do not have to be there, only their "imprint" on the solution in which they are dissolved. Agitation makes the memory.

So what do molecules sound like? "At the moment we don't quite know," says Didier Guilleminet, Benveniste's colleague at the Digital Research Laboratory. "When we record a molecule such as caffeine, for example, we should get a spectrum, but it seems more like noise. However, when we play the caffeine recording back to a biological system sensitive to it, the system reacts. We are only recording and replaying; at the moment we cannot recognise a pattern." But, Benveniste adds, "the biological systems do. We've sent the caffeine signal across the Atlantic by standard telecommunications and it's still produced an effect."

The effect is measured on a "biological system" such as a piece of living tissue. Benveniste claims, for instance, that the signal from molecules of heparin - a component of the blood-clotting system - slows down coagulation of blood when transmitted over the Internet from a laboratory in Europe to another in the US. If true, it will undoubtedly earn Benveniste a Nobel prize. If not, he will receive only more scorn.

Benveniste's ideas are revolutionary - many might say heretical or misguided - and he is unlikely to persuade his most ardent critics. Although his ideas may seem plausible enough, he will win over his enemies only if his results can be replicated by other laboratories. So far this has not been done to the satisfaction of his many detractors.

UPDATE

THE PLANNED destruction of the last known stocks of the smallpox virus in June should be postponed, or "important scientific opportunities" could be lost, says the Institute of Medicine in the US. Two centres hold the virus - the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, and a Russian virology institute in Novosibirsk in Siberia. The World Health Organisation intends to destroy them, but critics say that some countries may have kept smallpox stocks for use as bio-weapons.

THE "WORKING draft" of the human genome's 2 billion or so base pairs should be ready by spring 2000, 18 months ahead of time. It will cover at least 90 per cent of the genome, which contains roughly 100,000 genes. The completion date for the entire sequencing should be 2003, though the three centres doing sequencing work to publish the data are racing Craig Venter's company Celera, which aims to patent human gene sequences in the US.

THE COMET Hale-Bopp, which blazed across the sky in 1997, may be full of primordial material from which the Sun and the planets formed almost 5 billion years ago. Radio telescope data found that the comet's nucleus was spewing a volatile mixture of primordial deuterium (an isotope of hydrogen), the poisonous gas hydrogen cyanide and heavy water (water containing deuterium). The material may be rising from deep within the comet, said Geoffrey Blake, a professor of cosmochemistry and planetary sciences at California Institute of Technology. The images, published in *Nature*, suggest that 15 to 40 per cent of Hale-Bopp's mass is pristine interstellar material, while the rest has been transformed during the comet's long passages through space.

NEW INSIGHTS into the way the brain analyses visual information is revealed in *Nature*. Researchers at the Paul Sabatier University in Toulouse report that putting together a three-dimensional picture of an object occurs earlier in the visual pathway - between retina and visual cortex - than was thought. The brain integrates information coming from the retina with information about the direction in which the eyes are pointed. The scientists say that nerve cells in the area of the visual cortex, known as V1, not only react to orientation of a visual stimulus, but also monitor the differences in its position on each retina, which gives information about how far away the stimulus is. It had been thought that this information was adjusted to reflect the direction of gaze at a later stage.

Listening to a clamour of voices

DO SCIENTISTS have a social responsibility? My own view is that the only special obligation they have is to put their work and its applications into the public domain. Love my colleagues as I do, I would not let them choose me a tie, let alone make ethical decisions on my behalf.

I do not want any group of experts making ethical decisions on their own that could affect our lives. Of course, any public discussion must be informed by reliable knowledge - the debate on genetically modified foods is an excellent counter-example.

Because there is so much anxiety that unregulated exploitation of new discoveries may seriously affect our health and quality of life, I became involved in organising a meeting at the Royal Society to discuss such issues. This was not just a public relations exercise but an attempt to have a real discussion between scientists and technologists and their most vocal critics. So Dr Douglas Farr, the campaign director of Greenpeace, and Sheila McKechin, director of the Consumers Association, were invited, as well as Jonathan Parritt. (We did not invite Prince



LEWIS WOLPERT

Charles, as public argument would have been difficult.) All the tickets - which were free - were taken up weeks before the meeting. So how did it go?

Very well, even better than I had hoped. I had to listen to arguments to which I would normally give very little attention, and I suppose that was true for a lot of the audience. The discussion was vigorous and the Royal Society should be proud to have had so much criticism of science within its walls, justified or not. I cannot, for example, take seriously arguments against reductionism, which has been so successful, or agree that science does not tell us the "truth" about how the world works.

A common theme was an attack on my position on the

distinction between science and technology, and anxieties about the increasing power and influence of biotechnology companies, which drive many of the changes. There was concern that the market was the arbiter of risk, rather than people's own assessment. Dealing with the problem of global warming was driven by inter-governmental organisations, but the question of risks from GM foods was tackled by companies.

Another concern was the medicalisation of lifestyles, such as Steven Rose's claim that treatment for attention deficit disorder by the drug Ritalin was increasing in a way that bore little relation to real need.

Douglas Farr emphasised the importance of public values in policy making. These values, he argued, were both better and more reliable indicators than those of the experts. In terms of the precautionary principle, if there were any dangers with respect to GM foods, why proceed? Jonathan Parritt took a similar line and attacked the idea that public understanding of science should be based on a deficit model - that is, that the public are ignorant and need to be educated. He treated with

contempt the idea that GM food would help solve the world's hunger problems. That some people went hungry was nothing to do with the amount of food available; it was about political and economic decisions about distribution. A doubling of the world's population early in the next millennium could easily be catered for without any new food technology, a theory that was a shock for me. He has promised to send me the evidence.

Lord Sainsbury, the minister for science, opened the meeting and made clear that science had, from its very inception, a built-in set of rules for self-regulation - what was later referred to by Robert May, the Government's chief scientific adviser, as involving a clamour of voices, better known as peer review. Messy and noisy, but it works.

Science by press release, whether on GM foods or cold fusion, is just not acceptable. Lord Sainsbury and Robert May emphasised the importance of public consultation and more openness. Scientists need to understand the public.

Lewis Wolpert is professor of biology as applied to medicine at University College London.

TECHNOQUEST

Q When you see pictures of launches of the Saturn V rockets, you see lots of smoke. Why? The Apollo Saturn V rocket sits on top of a large hole. The engine nozzles dangle into a large free space (enough for a five-storey block of flats) which is used to dissipate the exhaust gases. If the nozzles were pointing at a solid surface the heat would melt it and the gas reboiling from the surface would destroy the rocket.

Near the bottom of the hole are some exits known as flame trenches. They let the gases escape back up to ground level so that they don't hit the rocket, or the launch tower and control equipment.

Imagine the Saturn V on top of its "hole" just before launch. A few seconds before the engines start, large water jets are started. They pour water down the hole. They flood the air with water droplets and cool the air as well as dragging it down the hole, setting up a massive downwards wind. When the engines ignite, the wind makes the exhaust go down the hole towards the flame trenches. The engine nozzles are surrounded by a cold down-draught that simulates what they will experience in the atmosphere. It takes a few seconds for the engines to reach full power, the burning to stabilise and the nozzles to reach the right temperature. The exhaust gases start to emerge from the end

of the flame trench and the rocket appears to be surrounded by smoke.

Q How do sweet-makers get the letters to go all the way through seaside rock?

Rock is made from sugars. First the sugars are heated up to about 300°C to make a syrup, some of which is coloured. The rest is put through a



Sweet success Phil Dye

pulling machine in which lots of tiny air bubbles are included, giving it a white colour. The rock at this stage is still hot and as it cools down it becomes like Plasticene and can be easily moulded.

While still warm the rock is rolled into long, thin tubes. The letters are then made by placing coloured tubes in among white ones to make a large (say, 5cm across) version of a stick of rock.

This large stick of rock is put on to a "batch roll", which keeps the rock in its cylindrical shape, and it is then extruded by hand, becoming

thinner and thinner until it is the size and shape that is wanted.

This process has to be done when the rock is still soft, so it has to be done quickly. The maximum number of letters that can be put in a rock depends upon the speed and expertise of the rock-maker. If the rock becomes completely cool, and therefore hard, before the above procedure is finished, the whole lot has to be thrown away.

Q What type of corpse are the scatopsid (fifty fly larva) found on?

Scatopsidae is a rather poorly known family of flies (Diptera), at least in terms of their biology. As far as it is known, most species breed in a variety of decaying plant and animal materials, eg rotting wood, damp compost, excrement and decomposing fungi. They are not typically associated with corpses, although some can breed in a wide variety of decaying substances and therefore could possibly do so in carrion at times, but as far as I know this has not yet been observed. Adult scatopsids are most often seen on flowers, and large numbers may sometimes be seen on vegetation following mass emergence near a breeding-site.

You can visit the Technoquest World Wide Web site at <http://www.sciencenet.org.uk>

The gift of generosity



Eduardo Paolozzi's substantial donation of his work to his native Scotland will soon have a permanent home. The playwright David Hare (left) spoke to the sculptor on the occasion of his 75th birthday

On 27 March, the National Galleries of Scotland are to open the new Dean Gallery in Edinburgh, which will see a permanent collection of work of Eduardo Paolozzi, and create the extraordinary abundance of his studio.

To celebrate the occasion, and to mark his 75th birthday, I went to talk to Eduardo. He lives in Chelsea in a resolutely Bohemian roundings, and when I arrived his daughter Emma was due a couple of hours later, "to help me sort out rubbish from the, er..."

"Art?" I ask. Spilling down the stairs is a litter of tins, boxes, newspapers and unopened shirts still in their cellophane. The inside of the bin is layered with disparate objects. They pile up, fermenting in imagination, like humus. Above the chaos, and up a flight of stairs, a single bed on which Eduardo lies at night, listening to what he calls the first Programme. "It's been my location. I owe everything to the first Programme."

With most artists, it is the studio that is unruly, and the living quarters which are tamed. But Eduardo, on the contrary, executes his work on the other side of the yard, in a place of comparative order. There are so many busts and plaster sculptures the accumulation of a life's work ranged neatly on library-like shelves, that the effect is beautifully monochromatic. You could be in a dusty annex of a quarry manager's office.

Eduardo is, as ever, physically compelling as he sits talking, never looking you in the eye, but always addressing his remarks a rather more than a few inches above your left shoulder, with the Renaissance power of his features stronger than ever for the passage of the years. I ask him about his working methods. He works every week, and every day of the week, he says, without exception.

"I set myself a task, and when it's done, then I'm finished and that's it. It's become a way of life. For me, the concept of work doesn't exist. Reading a newspaper may be as good as sketching a person sitting at a bus stop. That's Modernism. We accept that anything may be art. And here's a large public which can assimilate that into their range of ideas. So maybe our creative world is rather more open than yours, David. In the theatre, there's still such a thing as orthodoxy."

"I know. Maybe that is because, in the theatre, larger numbers of people are involved."

"I'm sure that's the reason," he agrees. "Artists can make an art-work by themselves, all on their own, and money isn't involved. That's the advantage we have over you. Our form is freer than yours because it's cheap."

"You say anything can be art. But do you ever see anything in a gallery and say 'That isn't art'?"

"I have the opposite reaction. I



Eduardo Paolozzi: 'I set myself a task and when it's done, then I'm finished and that's it. For me, the concept of work doesn't exist'

often see things elsewhere that might be art, particularly if I look at my old scrap-books. I used to cut out things from the *National Geographic* magazine. Often there would be advertisements done by a generation of commercial artists who really could draw. Even in the Fifties I used to say that certain advertising was as good as—or more interesting than—say, a rather bad watercolour by an RA.

"There's no point in being an artist if you have to subscribe to the actual moulds people would like you to inherit. *Punch* always used the fried egg in cartoons as a sort of symbol of the silliness of Modernism, but, by a wonderful irony, a pair of fried eggs ended up on display in the Royal Academy (in the Sensation show)."

"When I think about your work, I always think of that weird word 'fecund'. There are artists who are out to celebrate life in all its variety."

"That's right. You've chosen a

good word when you say "celebrate". Now I'm doing the breaker of the Enigma code, Alan Turing. I love an artist being able to celebrate their own idea of genius. It was the greyest time of the war, yet my work about Turing is going to be full of shape and colour—not at all what people expect. By the way, I've run into the story of this woman at Bletchley who was so well-bred that she didn't even know how to make a cup of tea. Didn't you use that in your film about black propaganda, *Licking Hitler*?

"A journalist reviewed the film saying he didn't believe that an 18-year-old girl, however posh, could fail to know how to make a cup of tea in 1941. Several women wrote in my defence, saying they themselves went into the Wrens in exactly that ignorance."

"Lucian Freud once told me that he bedded a very aristocratic girl and he sent her out to get breakfast. She came back with a lobster and two bottles of beer."

"Same idea."

"The first few drawings I've done of Turing are partly architectural. I like that world, and I've worked very hard on it. I want them to be works which will inspire an architect when he looks up from the drawing-board. I want them to fizz for him—I want the art I do to inspire musicians and architects, because I feel that is my audience, not necessarily the lay public."

"Really? Who are your audience?"

"Architects and musicians. I've been trying for ages to make a connection between shapes and music. Music means a lot to me; it's my petrol."

"Don't you care about the general public?"

"I did a sculpture in Selfridges. Three minutes away is the Wallace Collection. Selfridges is always packed and this incredible collection is always empty. Yet it could give such joy. What does that tell you?"

The public don't feel they need art, but they do need Selfridges."

"They need Monet, it seems."

"Take a photo of the queues there. It's the same people you see at the Chelsea Flower Show, Middle England. Listeners to *The Archers*. It's full of retired civil servants with a daughter called Lucinda at university and destined for oblivion."

"Isn't there a contradiction in what you say, Eduardo? You say you aren't offended by students not bothering to walk the hundred steps from the Royal College of Art to the Serpentine Gallery, but you yourself know the tradition inside out, and want to make a contribution to it."

"I do, very much. Yes, I want to contribute. Exactly. And I don't mind being considered minor, because a lot of minor musicians and even painters thrill me, far more than the major ones. I would rather listen to Lennox Berkeley than Beethoven all over again."

"But you met a lot of the major ones, didn't you, in Paris, just after the war? Did you just turn up at their front doors?"

"By a misunderstanding, I arrived at the door of Hans Arp, and I was sent packing. But not before he'd fixed a time for me to come back. Braque I just rang up. Not once was I turned down by anyone. I was even asked to come again by Léger. Even at an early age I was very critical of that myopic, catatonically withdrawn kind of English art, so I loved everything French—the world of Aragon and Breton. I'm a bizarre, upside-down kind of Frenchman. Remember, you could just look in the telephone book in 1947 and they were all there."

"You rang Giacometti?"

"Yes, I think the easy access to people like Brancusi was a kind of euphoria after getting rid of the Germans. It was open house. There was never a hiccup. I suppose it was naïveté, but one rang without any

feeling of embarrassment. You didn't go into the living-room. You just went to the studio and looked at what they'd been doing. There was a very black cloud over French intellectual life. The period had been so shattering that they were pleased to see you. I loved being in France, because I felt I wasn't such an oddball as I was in London. Every day was a day of euphoria, because I was exactly where I wanted to be."

"Have you had that euphoria since?"

"Erm... well, perhaps I've got more maturity. At the time there was just the sheer pleasure of being alive, and going for lunch with who you wanted to and not thinking about work. Now things are different. When I do the Alan Turing works, I want to give them to a hospital and a school. That will mean a lot to me."

"You're saying you felt euphoria when you were young, and now, instead, you have the deep pleasure of knowing what you want to do?"

"Exactly. I think a lot about this question of work. Even today, I wouldn't call myself obsessive. I dislike obsessiveness. It's dangerous for an artist because the work becomes a wall between you and reality. Work can cut you off from reality. That's what I feel when I see a lot of abstract painting—that it's only in touch with itself, and not with the world."

"When I think of you, I always think of your generosity."

"But what is strange to me is how ungenerous most artists are. Generosity should be normal. I can't understand why artists don't give their work away to the local hospital. It seems normal to me, but it never crosses their mind. I feel free now because I have no dealer, and I'm aware that if I had one it might limit my freedom to give my art away. I just know that unless I keep that freedom, I'm finished. Without making up my own mind I'm dead."

"You were very lucky, weren't you, to go to Paris when you did?"

"Very lucky indeed. Incredibly lucky. Because it's been the framework for my life. From these men—from Braque, from Tristan Tzara, from Giacometti, from Léger—I learnt the first and essential lesson: the lesson of sharing. They just let me in, and never behaved as if it were anything but what an artist does. I'm always shocked today when people collect all their lives and then sell the lot at Sotheby's, when there are museums that are crying out for these collections. I'm giving what I have to the V&A."

The new Dean Gallery at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, opens 27 March and will include the Paolozzi Gift, presented by the artist in 1994, and a recreation of his studio.

A longer version of this interview appears in the Spring issue of *Modern Painters* magazine. To order a copy for £5 (p&p free) call 0181-986 4654 with Visa/Access card

Muddled creatures of the night

DANCE

DRACULA
SADLER'S WELLS
LONDON

AS A vampire myself, I was heartened to find a host of my fellows, in their tiaras and cloaks, among the audience for Northern Ballet Theatre's London premiere of *Dracula*. At last, vampires are coming out of the closet and affirming pride in their identity. The ballet has acquired a cult following in its regional touring since it was created in 1996, after the film-maker Ken Russell suggested the subject to his friend, the late Christopher Gable, then NET's director. "Dracula," he said, "has not failed at the cinema box office yet."

The ballet charts Bram Stoker's romanticised version of vampire history in which our master is seemingly destroyed at the end. More seriously, the action as staged by Gable and Patricia Doyle is a gem of muddle and ambiguity. They allowed the piece to evolve organically in collaboration with the dancers, when cold analysis would have insisted on



'Dracula': the whole company throws itself into the performance Laurie Lewis

signalling the narrative twists and turns clearly. The crucial encounters between Dracula and his victims are unnecessarily ambiguous, so that at first I thought Jonathan Harker had become one of us (he had not), and that Dracula's first nibbles at Lucy and Mina had done their deed (they had not). Characters are weakly flagged: it takes a while to dis-

entangle who each of the male Dracula-hunters is, and we never find out if Mr Renfield is mere madman or vampire.

Lez Broderston's designs must be one reason for the piece's success, going all out with decaying stonework, silhouetted trees, and curtains fluttering in open windows. There are some splendid effects, such as Mina and Drac-

ula slithering into nothingness, and Dracula's own destruction, vapourised in a cloud of smoke. Philip Feeney has written suitably macabre music, with additional help from choral voices, wolf howls and amplified heartbeats.

Above all, the whole company throw themselves into performing, from Denis Malinkine as Dracula, to the massed

rank of oppressed Transylvanians trying to transcend their terror in stamping folk dances. Jayne Began is lumbered with the role of Mina and can't overcome her boring goody-goodness. But Charlotte Broom finds plain sailing with gorgeous Lucy, her vitality translated into exuberant poutettes and dazzling smiles. Michael Pink's choreography is at its best here: distinctive, slow, broad and sinuous shapes that encapsulate Dracula's grotesque, insinuating power. His entrances are particularly spectacular, his hypnotic stillness holding all of us in his fist, whether he stands at the top of the castle stairs, resplendent in a long crimson coat, or hangs upside down like a bat in Lucy's bedroom. Malinkine's Bolshoi-derived strength comes into its own in the sensational pas de deux with Harker (Daniel de Andrade), manipulating him in eccentric overhead lifts and supports. Tall and shrewy, Malinkine is the ballet's darkly glittering core. Without him, it would probably collapse. He is a magnificent advertisement for vampire rehabilitation.

NADINE MEISNER

Musical mockery

CABARET

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
JERMYN STREET THEATRE
LONDON

AS L.P. Hartley wrote at the beginning of *The Go-Between*, "Broadway is a different country, they do things differently there." He didn't really, but if his novel were turned into a musical (don't even mention the idea) the merciless *Forbidden Broadway* team would be lampooning its pretensions within minutes of the curtain coming down. If you think that idea for a musical is downright silly, try this. The company rework Judy Garland's song "The Aitchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe" from *The Harvey Girls* as "The Ashkhabad, Tbilisi and Kiev Express", a dreamed-of final sequence for a musical of Anna Karenina.

Gerard Alessandrini's hit musical revue began life in 1982 and, although annually updated, his winning formula remains the same. Take a show, its star or its creative team, steal a tune, and write tart and terrific lyrics to burst the balloon. Worried that something so culturally specific won't travel? After all, few of us have seen this season's Broadway shows. Well, don't be. Virtually everything on Broadway, from *Cats* to Sam Mendes's revival of *Cabaret* (over-sexed and

over there) either originated here or is now playing here. You sure as hell don't need a glossary to get the references. Sondheim's lyrics are hilariously buttonholed in "Into the Words" while Cameron Mackintosh is pilloried to the tune of "My Favourite Things". After listing things to sell when the box-office flags—"Sweatshirts and T-shirts and blankets and mittens"—it ends: "It's \$45 to get into the show/And \$45 to leave." Sophie-Louise Dann crawls on her knees for a hilarious (and perfect) hatchet job on the vertically challenged Elaine Paige in *Sunset Boulevard*: "One foot more/And you'd see my face..."

Christine Pedi, meanwhile, is a one-woman cast album rasping away as a fiercely funny Elaine Strich, an ear-blasting Ethel Merman, a very mannered Barbra Streisand, a deranged Carol Channing and a viciously funny and manic Liza Minnelli: "Do the words 'Third Reich' mean anything to

you? Without them we wouldn't have had all of those Nazi musicals, like *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret*..."

Disney gets hammered with a swipe at the indignity of actors playing animated figures in *Beauty and the Beast*, with Alistair Robins rendering "Be My Guest" as "Be Depressed". Nor need you have seen *The Lion King* to get the joke about "Circle of Mice" (Gold-voiced Mark O'Malley), or Alvin Colt's deliciously silly spoofing re-creations of its eye-widening costumes—here all too-brushes and vacuum-cleaner hoses.

There are cracks at classic revivals—everyone except Trevor Nunn is likely to find the *Okla!oma!* jokes funny—and some numbers, like Philip George's marvellously staged summary of *Les Misérables*, are revivals in themselves. There are more lightning costume changes than a catwalk show and, in the confines of this 80-seat theatre, considerably less space, but that adds to the fun. This irrepressible gang of four, plus Paul Knight on piano, leap into loving but vengeful satirical gear at full throttle.

DAVID BENEDICT

MUSIC



Some guys have all the luck

Robert Palmer is the boy from Batley who made it big. A new album, a wardrobe full of smart suits and a sumptuous international lifestyle – his only worry is whether he'll have to loosen his belt. By Glyn Brown

Robert Palmer quite possibly thinks he's it. But that's OK because, in a way, he's right. A native Batley boy, he has made judicious use of his fine voice (a baritone, he can also sing tenor or falsetto, a whopping range), eclectic musical tastes (Detroit rhythm, reggae, bossa nova, techno-kraut) and debonair demeanour, to establish an unassailable place in the rock canon.

Some contend that Palmer was cheated of the status he deserved – the average Joe probably knows him for mid-Eighties stomps such as "Addicted to Love", a memory prompted by the notorious video of long-legged, possibly lobotomised, guitar-wielding loveites. Still, he has the respect of his peers, a sumptuous lifestyle with a home on the Swiss-Italian border, and a new album recorded in Capri. This would all tend to make you slightly pleased with yourself.

As might the fact that at 50, and despite a recent claim that "Good living has blurred my once-taut outline", Palmer is in powerful form. He demonstrated this at a showcase in February where, in a room of Thai-food-chomping sales managers, he delivered maximum Rob. Backed by a gospel choir, he mixed new tracks with gems from the past but, not surprisingly, it was the raunchy, sex-beast stuff that went down best – rock from a time before *Loaded* or *FHM* but somehow refiguring them: GG with its loosened and its shirt undone. Palmer, in trademark suit, sweated the show like the soul man he is, rending his hair and grimacing. His

hand movements, however, were orate and geisha-like, and his well-shod feet so tiny they might once have been bound.

A few days later, in his hotel room, I got to see it all close up. Not known for his love of the press, Palmer is sitting at the table smoking sternly and, at 10.30am, is half-way through a pitcher of Bloody Mary, having waved away tea or coffee with a curl of the lip. He clearly has the constitution of a tank, but there is, indeed, a craginess to his playboy looks. In an Armani two-piece and wire-rimmed glasses, he has the air of a slightly malevolent, if touchily stylish, doctor.

If there is a fault he'll admit to – though in Palmer's view it's more of a quality – it's intolerance. "I'm intolerant of incompetents and ignorance. That's one thing I recognise about my age; I used to suffer fools, but I won't now." It's this that makes some think him arrogant. He isn't, quite. Nevertheless, his self-assurance has been his lodestar. Having studied comparative religion, he believes, as you would, in a composite god. Where does he look for reassurance? "To my inner harmony." He indicates his chest and laughs, as if it's obvious. "That's where God is."

Though born in Yorkshire, at three months old Palmer's family moved to Malta, where his father worked in naval intelligence. A solitary boy, he would accompany his parents to the glamorous balls of the international expatriate community. Here, and on American Forces radio, he heard Lena Horne, Sinatra and Nat King Cole, and soaked up a sophisticated approach to life. He became obsessed, for example, with the uniforms of the Italian naval officers – "They looked happening"

– and grew fascinated over the neatness of his school wear.

It wasn't vanity, he now insists. "I've always been fastidious about clothes. Psychological thing, I suppose. I don't like to get dirty." (The globe-trotting Palmer, by the way, has an accent that blends Batley and Los Angeles – Michael Parkinson goes Valley Girl. Or perhaps it's Alan Bennett. Of a recent tour of the States, where he was again depressed by messiness: "St Louis was – whoah! It'd gone downhill, it was scruffy...") Years later,

'I'm intolerant of ignorance. That's one thing I recognise about my age'

when he began performing, the immaculate Marvin Gaye and Otis Redding were his arbiters of taste. Plus a suit is a disguise and, he claims, he is painfully shy. Finally, "It's what you do, not how it looks." A sigh. "And thank God I never got tied up in any silly fashions – I nearly mentioned Bryan Ferry but he had a feather boa, didn't he? – and had to look back and die of embarrassment."

The family returned to England, where the weather came as a nasty shock, and at 12 Palmer began guitar lessons with "a little old lady who burned a paraffin stove. First time was 'The Girl from Ipanema'." After school there was a stint at art college, but the curriculum "didn't encourage artistry", and he left to develop his R&B tastes. At 19 he got his first pro-

fessional singing job; and he met his wife Sue, a fabric designer, on Slough station.

"I was taken by her style. Silver boots and silver mini-dress. The Sixties, y'know?" You just introduced yourself? "Well, she was also reading a science fiction book, and I'm a sci-fi fan."

Palmer is a private man but, despite the humping, grinding mid-period hits, to which the quest for random sex is brainlessly urgent, his personal life has been famously settled. It's quite a shock, then, to discover that the couple divorced more than 10 years ago.

But back to 1973, when he was spotted singing with Elkie Brooks in Vinegar Joe by Island records' MD Chris Blackwell. Blackwell flew him to New Orleans and set him up to record his debut album with those legendary funk stalwarts, The Meters. "To begin with, there was a definite impression of 'What's the white boy doing here?' Ten minutes into the session, we hit a real big pocket and it got hot. The drummer stood up and said: 'Hey, what's your name?' From then on, we rocked." The result, *Sneakin' Sally through the Alley*, was a cult success but, despite sophisticated follow-ups, the gorgeous singles from them – "Every Kinda People", "Johnny and Mary", "Looking for Clues", "Some Guys Have All the Luck" – did only moderately well.

It was joining the lumbering Power Station, with Duran Duran's John and Andy Taylor, that brought Palmer worldwide stardom in 1984; the album he made when he left, *Riptide*, was his first number one, powered by "Addicted to Love" and its incendiary video. Two years later, *Heavy Nova* continued the video for-

mula ("Simply Irresistible", "I Didn't Mean to Turn You On") that so many found offensive, and went platinum.

Subsequent albums came and went unnoticed. It almost didn't matter – he'd been able to bring up his kids in the Bahamas, then move to the chocolate-box town of Lugano – but Palmer has his pride. Thus, a new label and his first LP in five years. Called *Rhythm & Blues*, it mixes romance with solid grooving, one or two eccentricities, a lost jewel from Little Feat's Lowell George and a cover of Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On". Is he pleased with it?

"Some of it's blatantly erotic," he snorts. I wonder whether he tries to be provocative. "Just being honest." A shrug. "First thing anyone notices about somebody is what sex they are." When he's not working, Palmer likes to read, or irritate his teenage son and daughter by cranking up Motorhead or Ramstein. ("German goth band... wooo, they're fantastic.") He keeps his cigarette case full, except when he's performing, and remains a bon vivant ("And then it's another belt-hole. For whom the belt holes..."). He always claimed not to do drugs, and though now he'll say "Ah – I just never admitted it", he doesn't need them, anyway.

"I didn't used to be able to sit down... I thought that unless I was running around I'd vanish. Now I'm real good at relaxing. Light a fire. Put the slippers on. Watch TV." He looks up. Even talking about slippers, he's suave. "It's such a buzz doing that."

Rhythm & Blues is released on 12 April. The single, "True Love", is out Monday. Robert Palmer tours the UK in April.

LYRIC SHEETS

MARTIN NEWELL

Thirty years ago, in the name of World Peace, John Lennon and Yoko Ono took to their beds in a luxury suite on the ninth floor of the Amsterdam Hilton. This media event-cum-art statement lasted for a week and made world headlines.

Room 902

Amsterdam Hilton

March 1969

HAIR PEACE BED PEACE



So did it change the world, that time? Not London's world in office shoes Which struggled joyless, back from work To see it on the tea-time news The traffic on the Blackfriars Bridge Still thundered over just the same The Sixties, not that London cared Was over now in all but name The Sixties over? What a shame Or what a sham, as some insisted They never put the posters up Not round our way and so... we missed it.

Hard to believe this bearded guy Messiah-in-pyjamas Who, with granny glasses Lying beside His newly wedded voodoo bride Once sang, a scant two years before, "It's Getting Better". All the time, TV and newsreel journalists Were clustered round the pair agog They'd booked the presidential suite A dead-expensive room and bog Set nine floors up above the street.

Hair Peace. Bed Peace. I really tried To understand. I swear I did And still a kid, defended it From all these early skinhead types And I was wrong and they were right But someone hit it on the head: "A week in bed?" my mate's mum said As if it were an offer On the label of a tin of rice "Yes. I could do with that right now And Peace – that would be very nice."

ROBERT HANKS ON TV

'Dispatches' suggested that police not only massaged crime figures but gave them topless relief

PAGE 18



The Cardigans
Monday 26th April
WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL
Tuesday 27th April
GLASGOW BARROWLAND
Wednesday 28th April
MANCHESTER ACADEMY
Thursday 29th April
LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL

I'M SURE I SAW THEM ON A POSTER...

THE INDEPENDENT'S REGULAR ROUND-UP OF NEW BANDS

WHISTLER
KING'S CROSS
WATER RATS, LONDON

SNOWPONY
ASTORIA, LONDON

MEDAL
CAMDEN BARFLY, LONDON

entreated long-lost lovers "Don't jump in front of my train". Still, Whistler seemed overjoyed to be alive next to Snowpony. With former members of Stereolab, Echobelly and My Bloody Valentine, they have an impressive pedigree and their debut album *The Slow-Motion World of Snowpony* has been rapturously received in

indie circles. But "slow-motion" understates Snowpony's world: lacklustre and laboured would be more fitting. Vocalist Katherine Gifford might have been dragged out of bed for the show while her listless vocals made her sound like she was halfway through a yawn. Some respite was offered in instrumental moments that mixed brazenly upbeat percussive sounds with sinister guitars. Keyboardist Debs Smith also provided mercurial relief as she rocked maniacally on her heels and punched the keys with a clenched fist.

The Oxford five-piece Medal came equipped with a singer with all the correct credentials: a bone structure to rival The Verve's Richard Ashcroft, heavy eyelids and an impossibly skinny frame that made you want to help bear the weight of his guitar. With their delicate melodies and plaintive demeanour, Medal have clearly taken lessons from their local forebears Radiohead, though their pastoral atmospherics echo Pink Floyd. The singer's fragile vocals were sustained by warm organ sounds which were systematically shattered by swirling, psychedelic guitars. While they put on a largely compelling show, they possessed neither the intellectual prowess or the searing intensity of Radiohead, and you couldn't help thinking that Medal have missed the miserabilist boat.

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Come on, feel the noise

Mogwai play loud. (And very quiet.) And they have a few sordid myths they'd like to dispel. By Ben Thompson

Before this interview can get properly underway, there is something Mogwai need to get off their chests. It concerns what can only be called "The Sanitary Protection Incident". This is one of those stories which follow hands around - like Led Zeppelin and the fish, or 911's pact with Satan - getting repeated in various forms in everything that's written about them. The King James version unfolds along the following lines.

Trapped in a European tour environment where alcohol was hard to come by - it is hard to know quite how to put this in a family newspaper, but frank and fearless seems the best approach, so here goes - Mogwai briefly soaked lampoons in vodka and inserted them into their rectal cavities in order to facilitate the swift and efficient entry of the small available stock of alcohol into their bloodstreams.

"It's terrible," says lanky bass-player Dominic Aitchison. "I can't ever let my mum read anything written about us because that story always crops up."

"Sometimes they say it happened in Poland," is guitarist Stuart Braithwaite's more practical objection, "which would be ridiculous because alcohol is really cheap there - it only makes sense in Scandinavia."

In the interests of Dominic's mum's peace of mind, Mogwai would like it to be known that they never did this strange and devious deed, merely referred to the practice in an innocent conversation with a journalist, whose own alleged drunkenness caused him to misre-

member it with the band as participants rather than narrators. They told the story in tandem with another - even more gruesome - about shaven-domed Russian ravers splitting their heads open with razors, covering the wounds with masking tape, then putting the glue goes straight into their brains.

Mogwai would like it to be known that they have never done this either. Even though, some of their more brutal music - the giant dinosaur-grunt guitar in "Like Herod", or the mighty vortex of "Mogwai Fear Satan" - could be said to offer a similar level of cerebral dis-

'We always had a serious intent to rock. We blew up an amp at our first practice'

orientation with a less explicit risk of agonising death. Named after the endearing creature in *Gremlins*, which became demonic on contact with water, Mogwai's music is a blend of impenetrable mischief and heart-stoppingly destructive potential. Other band's drummers use the rhythmic water-wings known as "click tracks". Their drummer uses a pacemaker.

From an early London gig, in September 1996 at the Monarch (a horrible little room, like watching a band play inside a kidney) to this January's triumphant sold-out appearance in the wide-open spaces of the London Astoria, it's the in-

tensity of their music that has set Mogwai apart from their peers. Their sound is largely instrumental, with moments of exquisite delicacy alternating with huge swathes of noise, to create an overall effect that is simultaneously beautiful and daunting - like walking underwater through a school of whales.

"We were never a muckabout band right from the beginning," insists the diminutive but abundantly charismatic Braithwaite. "We always had a serious intent to rock... we blew up an amp at our first practice!" The healing power of noise is one thing all four of this young Scottish quartet are firmly agreed upon. "The thing about noise is it confuses your brain," Stuart continues, "so if tunes are hidden in it, that makes them more rewarding. There are a lot of bands tighter or more technically proficient than us that don't get the same kind of reaction."

The tingle which runs through a Mogwai audience in the opening moments of a song people recognise is more than a ripple, it's a surreality. This collective expression of pleasure is more reminiscent of a cult than a gig. Only the feeling in the crowd as *Underworld* launch into "Born Slippy" live comes close to it, but even that generation-delineating anthem has words in it for people to latch on to. To elicit the kind of emotional response Mogwai do with music that - excepting the occasional taped spoken word interlude, one guest vocal turn from Arab Strap's Aidan Moffat, and the title track of the new album on which Stuart makes a notable singing debut - has no truck with the human voice, is a truly imposing achievement.

Mogwai's new album, *Come On Die Young*, attests to their rapid evolu-



Mogwai's largely instrumental sound mixes moments of frightening brutality with passages of exquisite delicacy Tom Craig

tion. It was recorded with Mercury Rev's Dave Fridmann at the studio controls, in Cassadaga, upstate New York. The reasoning behind this choice of location was not, as might have been expected, an attempt to touch psychic bases with obscure American bands such as Slint and Bardo Pond who are Mogwai's primary inspiration; it was far more practical. "We were hoping to all turn up for work every day," Stuart explains, "because we were so far away from home there'd be no escape."

The fruit of their heightened concentration is a record which, on first hearing, seems almost pathologically low key, but then swiftly twines itself around your heart with

the rogue tenacity of a wild strawberry. "We knew the whole thing was going to be dead quiet - we didn't want to do the quiet/loud thing again, because we'd done that pretty well on the first album (1997's deliciously bracing *Mogwai Young Team*) but then when we started to record all the songs together, every single one was in a minor key and we began to think Jesus Christ, this is really depressing."

It's very pretty though, isn't it? "I don't think sad music is depressing," Stuart affirms, his mood brightening. "It's bad music that's depressing; good music is uplifting, however sad it is." "Punk Rock" *Come On Die Young*'s opening track, bleeds

a speech by Iggy Pop into a somberly meandering guitar line. "I don't know Johnny Rotten," the great man notes, "but I'm sure he puts as much blood and sweat into what he does as Sigmund Freud did." At times like this, Mogwai's blend of pure sound and found voices seems to have established direct access to the unconscious.

Like their last release, the polemically self-explanatory *No Education - No Future (Fuck the curfew)* EP, the title for Mogwai's new album came from a graffiti near their homes in Lanarkshire. Those uneasy about the band's instrumental bent have been inclined to exaggerate their social realist tendencies

as if proximity to dour Scottish housing estates somehow excused them from lyric duty.

"That's rubbish," says Stuart cheerfully. "We're all middle class. Just because we wear a lot and get pissed occasionally doesn't stop our families living in nice houses..." He pauses for a moment, his thoughts turning mischievously to a fellow countryman even more notorious for drinking and bad language. "You might be interested in having a look at Aidan from Arab Strap's house, by the way - it's the biggest one in Falkirk!"

'Come On Die Young' (Chemical Underground) is out on 29 March

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هنا من الأصل

THIS WEEK'S ALBUM RELEASES

REVIEWED BY ANDY GILL

**ROOTS MANUVA**
Brand New Second Hand
Big Dada

LIKE SOMETHING out of the paranoid fictions of Thomas Pynchon, there are now two music industries existing side-by-side in Britain. The more powerful, mainstream one dominates the public perception of pop culture with a dire parade of showbiz fluff and celebrity crossovers, promoting a strategy in which a performer's soap-opera or sitcom profile is vastly more important than their music. Such has, admittedly, always been the case, though the four major conglomerates have never before wielded quite such a stranglehold as they do now.

Fortunately, there's a network of small labels fulfilling the vital function which the majors' A&R departments have complacently neglected. Thanks to them, 1999 is already shaping up as a vintage year, with tremendous releases by Smog, Jimi Tenor, Jim O'Rourke, Colin Reid, Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Pop-Off Tuesday and Beth Orton joined here by the debut offering from Rodney Smith, aka Roots Manuva.

The title of Roots's album is a concise summation of the sampling aesthetic, the way that new vessels are wrought from old materials and memories—especially,

in his case, from the Jamaican dance-hall strut of the early Nineties, rendered here through deep techno basslines and terse drum cracks. There's a warm, twitchy swagger to cuts such as "Clockwork" and "Oh Yeah" that's utterly irresistible. Elsewhere, Manuva varies his beats with some originality, as when a disjointed, arhythmic groove is used to evoke the odd atmosphere of "Strange Behaviour".

Roots himself describes his style as "Wacky beats, mid-tempos, bleeps and blurps, crazy, zany phraseologies and intergalactic organics", which 'comes close, but doesn't quite convey the trip-hoppy mood or the unusual mix of menace and deadpan comedy in his raps. With his tone of lofty, nonchalant assertiveness and his dark declamations upon decaying social structures, I'm reminded more than once of both Rakim and the Wu-Tang Clan, though even they would be hard pushed to equal "Jungle Tings Proper", where street-level obligations are weighed against the wider geopolitical picture. Roots Manuva is by some distance the most significant and original new voice in hip-hop. And he's British, too.

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**
Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida
Rocket

SOMETIMES, FACED with the tide of corporate hogwash that is the modern record industry, words fail me. Would that a similar affliction had stricken Tim Rice before he decided that the first rhyme of this album—sorry, this "cross-platform multi-media project"—would pair "ruler" with "muscular".

This version of the great Verdi operatic warhorse Aida is effectively the follow-up to The Lion King, Elton John and Tim Rice's last commission from Disney, though here there are no cute cartoons to sell the songs; just a parade of tired old rock lags such as Sting, Lemmy Kravitz and Tina Turner, augmented by boring but bankable younger talents such as Shania Twain, Boyz II Men and, of course, The Spice Girls.

The result is the kind of awesome abomination that should have aficionados of camp gleefully shouting the worst lines back at the performers, and arguing as to which is the more hilariously ill-matched of Elton's duetters—LeAnn Rimes, Lulu, Janet Jackson (awful), or the spectacularly dreadful Céline Dion wannabe, Heather Headley. Still, at least now we know who put the "A" in Aida.

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**
River of Song
Smithsonian Folkways

SINCE ITS establishment in 1948, Moe Asch's Folkways label has served as the Smithsonian Institute's aural arm, a repository of American cultural roots dedicated to ensuring that the work of such seminal figures as Leadbelly and Dock Boggs is available to hear today. This two-CD set, the sound-track to a PBS television series, uses the Mississippi river as a geographical thread by which to link the musics (mostly roots musics, despite the ill-advised attempt to shoehorn in the likes of Soul Asylum) of the American Midwest and South. The journey starts in the Minnesota headwaters with a Chippewa Indian pow-wow chant and the Skai Club Spelmanslag's bowed-saw rendition of "Red-Headed Swede", proceeding through St Louis (folk, jazz, blues), Memphis (R&B, gospel, rockabilly) and Mississippi (blues) to Louisiana (jazz, blues, cajun, and creole R&B). Despite a few incongruities—Tex-Mex music from Illinois?—it's a richly varied ride, illustrating the country's cosmopolitan make-up. It's educational, too: how else would music lovers know they should at all costs avoid getting stranded in the musical wastelands of Iowa and Wisconsin?

**DAVID THOMAS**
Mirror Man
Cooking Vinyl

THE LATEST album by the Pere Ubu founder, an offshoot of his "Disastodrome" South Bank season of last year, also involves a musical journey, this one taking place "in the space between where you are and where you want to be". Following such American pioneers as Harry Partch, it's an evocation of intangible geographical presence, Thomas using collaborators with a finely-tuned sense of place—Jackie Leven, Linda Thompson and Peter Hammill—to detail his notional Nowheresville, USA. The poet Bob Holman's impressionistic beat travelogue "Mirror Man Speaks" opens proceedings in fine style: against a shimmering haze of sound, he skillfully sets the mood of suspension you slip into while travelling, that sense of being lifted out of the present into the timeless state of disinterested observer. From there, the ruminations upon places from Montana to Memphis build up to a national montage, a *bricolage* of road signs, advertising boardings and observations dedicated to putting the local back into locality. As David Hild observes in his "Ballad of Florida", it's not a small world any more, not since Disneyland became Disneyworld.

**SKUNK ANANSIE**
Post Orgasmic Chill
Virgin

WHAT WITH Pre-Millennial Tension and now Post-Organic Chill, there's a bit of a Present Pretention Surfeit hanging around rock's dimmer corners these days. Life goes on pretty much as before in Skunk Anansie land—the wee bald lass is still upset about one thing or another, and frankly, the rest of us could care less. Even with a lyric sheet, songs such as "On My Hotel TV" and "We Don't Need Who You Think You Are" still seem like little more than incoherent rants studded with spiky buzz-words—black, gay, nigga, blood, crucify, blame, god, kill, victim—which lose any impact they might have contained under Skin's less than tender ministrations.

There are half-hearted attempts to add a little more spritely variety to the golem tread of their trademark heavy riffing, by blending in the occasional techno passage to "Charlie Big Potato", or lading strings over tracks such as "Tracy's Flaw" and "Secretly", but any intended gradations of mood are hidden behind Skin's acidulous vocals.

She appears to have mistaken shrieking for intensity, and the result is the complete absence of any emotional tone save reproach.

RIFFS

THE FIRST AND LATEST RECORDS BOUGHT BY CLAIRE MARTIN, JAZZ VOCALIST

Rubettes

Sugar Baby Love
It was teeny-bop pop; the Rubettes wore big white golfing caps and The Goodies TV show took the mickey out of them—I think I made one of those hats out of paper. You had to see them to believe them. How embarrassing. I remember quite vividly that I was a Rubettes fan, and was either six or seven, and

went to the BBC, where they were doing *Top of the Pops*, and waited outside, watching them go in and out. I found it very emotional. The song had a high bit, and it had something that really, really moved me, perhaps mostly owing to my first real heavy-duty crush, Alan Williams, the lead singer. He was good-looking, the first person to make me blush. I can't say that they

had any influence on me, but even now I think they're good, and if I wanted to flatter them I would describe their sound as Motown pop.

Elvis Costello and
Burt Bacharach
Painted From Memory
How they wrote this album is interesting. They just sat opposite each other, at two

facing pianos, which is collaborative in a way I have never thought of doing. It's basically new Bacharach songs with Costello lyrics, and as a brand-new collaboration it really, really works. I have always been a big Costello fan, and I think he has reached a peak as an artist on this album. It's not easy to follow in the footsteps of Howard David. The Bacharach and

David Songbook introduced me to so many great songs, and singers, such as Aretha Franklin, Dusty Springfield. It's a surprising album, as well, because you wouldn't expect the contemporary, evocative and movingly edgy lyrics to work with the swish, elaborate Bacharach orchestration. But they complement each other like light and shade. I have just

recorded a Costello track, and will sing some of these new songs at my concert, and hope that Costello will really like it and tell me he loves me.

INTERVIEW BY
JENNIFER RODGER

Claire Martin will be at Pizza Express Jazz Club, Dean Street, London W1, from 24 to 28 March. (0171-439 8722)

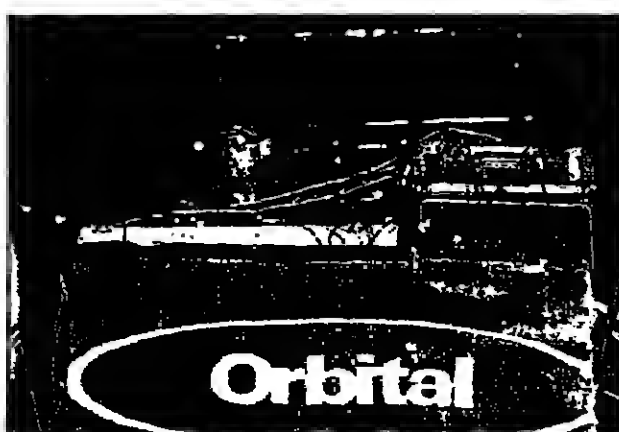


What goes around...

LIVE
ORBITAL
COLSTON HALL
BRISTOL

IS THIS how techno ends, not banging but whimpering? The musical revolution that began in the Summer of Love has been transplanted to the safe environment of a municipal hall, where red-coated local authority stewards man the exits, their ears plugged with cotton-wool. What once came across as sonic transgression now seems almost cosy.

Phil and Paul Hartnoll of Orbital—named after the M25 motorway that took so many early ravers to illegal parties in muddy fields—are engaged on a national tour whose destinations include the civic halls that only a few years ago would have been disparaged as beyond the pale. Playing stand-up music in a sit-down venue, Orbital were hamstrung right from the start, but despite the difficulties the show worked, more or less. If you stood up



All the comforts of home: Orbital at the decks

and danced, the performance could perhaps be counted as a success. For those of us sitting in the stalls, however, it was like watching paint dry, coat, after coat, after coat.

Orbital were preceded by a sound system whose ambient techno mix reminded you of old Paul Hardcastle tunes (a retro-connection that refused to go away all night). Then a fanfare from A Clockwork Orange sig-

nalled the progress of the brothers into their enclosure of computer and keyboard workstations, with the duo's trademark torchlight goggles providing a much-needed visual stimulus. Soon, great granite-like slabs of synthesiser chords filled the air, with bass frequencies so loud they resounded in your chest cavity. Instead of being dangerous, however, the sound was almost

indecently clean and healthy, especially for techno.

The problem for the audience in the half-full hall was how to react. Should they go totally mental from the start, or ease into fully fledged mania incrementally? At first, they remained almost touchingly shy, with only the most out-of-it boys coming to the front to dance, but after a while even the most reserved left for the front, or half-shimmied by their seats, hedging their bets.

Orbital's music was accompanied by a multi-screen film-show that seemed to have something to do with the millennium. Clocks wound forward; binary codes scrolled, and at the end fingers pressed buttons that may well have been sending Stealth bombers off on some final, apocalyptic mission. It would have looked great in a tent, but from a curfymunicipal seat it was just like watching television. All that was missing was the pipe and slippers.

PHIL JOHNSON
Tours to Sun 28 March

As if 1992 never ended

LIVE**GOO GOO DOLLS**
UNIVERSITY OF
LONDON UNION
LONDON

BECOMING MONSTROUSLY successful in the alternative sector of American rock'n'roll is a process similar to acquiring an arts degree from a British university—hang around long enough and you'll get it eventually, apparently regardless of your worth, ability or dress sense.

The New York trio Goo Goo Dolls have been doggedly tooting their amiable but unremarkable power-pop to any audience who'd put up with them for what feels like centuries, and in the last year have received their reward: a hit song ("Iris") in a hit movie (*City of Angels*), a three-million-selling album, *Dizzy Up the Girl* (their sixth), a clutch of Grammy nominations, a thriving ubiquity on MTV, and the satisfaction of seeing the unlikely name of the singer

John Rzeznik become a household word.
All things considered, Goo Goo Dolls look unsurprisingly pleased with themselves when they first appear tonight, the second of two sold-out shows. They tell us they're here to have a good time, and courteously extend the hope that we'll have a good time too. A great deal of bouncing up and down ensues, both on stage and in front of it.
The three-piece lineup (Rzeznik, bass player Robby Takac and drummer Mike Malinin) is augmented by an extra guitarist and a keyboardist, and while the racket they whip

up is initially engaging enough, it cannot disguise, over the course of an undeniably energetic hour or so, the wearying thin gruel that constitutes much of Goo Goo Dolls' canon. To look at them, you'd think 1992 had never ended—they resemble nothing so much as Soundgarden's roadies larking about during soundcheck—and their music displays a similar refusal to recognise that the world has kept on turning since "Nevermind". At their occasional best, Goo Goo Dolls almost evoke the ecstatic timefulness of the vastly underrated Seattle group The Posies; otherwise, they bear a disturbingly remarkable similarity to Ned's Atomic Dustbin, and it's difficult to think of anything we need to hear less, at this point.

Along with many of their ilk,

what Goo Goo Dolls clearly aspire to is the ability to invest spirited post-punk rock'n'roll with a certain poetry and sensitivity—they indicated as much a while back by prevailing upon Paul Westerberg (erstwhile frontman of the incomparable Replacements) to write a song with them ("We are the Normal"). Westerberg is a more than worthwhile benchmark (and his imminent third solo album sounds something like a masterpiece), but while it's easy to imagine that Goo Goo Dolls will continue to entertain and invigorate crowds of drunk students until the earth splits into the sun and our Lord Beelzebub calls us all home, it's some way harder to picture them coming up with anything anyone will remember beyond the fading of their last chord.

ANDREW MUKILLER

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Is the new medium the message?

The latest in hi-fi hype, DVD offers stunning quality of sound and vision. But with only a tiny number of titles, is there much to interest the music enthusiast?

Music may be invisible, but we love to observe it being made: fighting for seats on the keyboard side in recitals, feasting on the sawing arms and ballooning cheeks of the orchestra. This is not indulgence; it's our way of physically experiencing music, of vicariously joining in. And when the process is invisible – as in an organ recital where the performer is hidden in a loft – we feel cheated. The disembodied music of records and radio is something we have grown up with, but it is still – both figuratively and in practice – an aberration.

Such retrograde thoughts are now being harnessed for the biggest industrial push the world of music-video has ever known. While the man-in-the-street may be hazy about what "DVD" stands for, the media hack knows it stands for a marketing barrage. Digital Versatile Disc, it's said, will change our lives.

But we've heard such claims before. Remember "digital compact cassette" and the 12-inch laser-disc? Remember the "enhanced CD"? Failures all. CD-Rom was once a bright hope in the classical music business, but is now a reference preserve. Recordable CDs may be doing well in the shops, but their long-term prospects are dubious. Even the mighty mini-disc has clouds on its horizon.

Why should we take DVD more seriously? In the interests of science, I submit to a hard sell at Warners. Since I'm a technological idiot, the facts have first to be explained. A DVD disc may look like a CD, but it contains seven times more digital information, in which visual and audio elements sit side by side; it offers music, film, still pictures, text and

SIGHT READINGS



MICHAEL CHURCH

visual menus. The picture quality and five-channel sound are, I am told, the best in existence.

The Warners men play two discs: Bruno Monsiegeon's *Richter: The Enigma*, and Adventures in Motion Pictures' celebrated *Swan Lake*. Having previously watched the Richter film on VHS, I am ravished by what I now see and hear, and it's undeniably convenient to be able to click to points in the pianist's life and to specific pieces of music, without laboriously winding on (or back) in the hope of finding the right place.

The pleasure of Matthew Bourne's wicked *Swan Lake* is similarly intensified, though I am, of course, seeing it on state-of-the-art machinery. And it's useful, again, to be able to find those evil male cygnets, or that wrenching apotheosis, at the click of a button.

The Richter film has been tricked out with all the menu-to-text-to-subtext games Warners can devise. Likewise *Swan Lake*. Click to the "character" of the prince's commoner-girlfriend, and click again to the dancer in the part, where she trained etc. But this sort of guff normally comes in a booklet, where it's far easier to skim. Putting it on film

seems pointless, until you remember the insane war being waged by electronics against print.

Now some questions. DVD may have "arrived", but how widespread is it? "There are already 250,000 DVD players in Europe." That's not many. "True, but in America, where it was launched 12 months earlier, there are now more than a million sets in private hands. We expect their growth to be exponential here as well." Who buys them? "Early adopters tend to be thirtysomething males with plenty of cash." Is there a danger of buying the wrong sort of machine and its becoming obsolete, like the Betamax? "No danger. The machines have been devised by a cross-industry consortium."

When I ask if the present price of nearly £400 will drop over the next year or so, the reply is a rueful affirmative. They explain that though you can't play DVDs on a CD player, you can play CDs on a DVD player, which will make their sound quality even better. "So if you're thinking of buying a new CD player, far better to invest in DVD." But this brings us to the question of "product". Feature films apart, how many musical or operatic DVDs actually exist?

The faces lengthen. "By the end of 1999, there may be 50 in total, from all the record companies put together." Pathetic! "It's early days," they reply. "But we really need the press and retailers to take classical DVD as a serious category." Last week, in the Oxford Street branch of HMV, they found their beloved *Swan Lake* stuck in the porn section. Gathering that, in their parlance, I am a "laggard" as opposed to an "early adopter", they bring out their trump card: a portable DVD player including screen, not much bigger than a CD player. It's wonderful, and I want one. But not yet. The £950 price will surely fall.



Adventures in Motion Pictures' *'Swan Lake'* is intensified by DVD

Over now to the classical label Harmonia Mundi, where they thrust something called Watershed into my hands. This is described as "the first music DVD designed to totally utilise the medium's full capacity". Since the Harmonia Mundi office doesn't yet boast a DVD player, I take it to the Sony office and play it there. The first of its three pieces, by the composer Roger Reynolds, allows me to deconstruct a 30-minute solo by the percussionist Steven Schick, but the menu-voyages seem forced and unnecessary. I would far rather glean the background information from an old-fashioned booklet.

Meanwhile, Sony has just brought out its own first classical DVDs: great Karajan performances tricked

out with yet more on-screen programme notes. And though these are, once again, old films, the quality of both pictures and sound is stunning. Sony's vice-president is bullish: "You can't look at a DVD without remembering how horrible VHS was by comparison." He believes that what he calls "high-end" people – "older and more discriminating" – will be induced by DVD to buy things they never would have considered before. That may be so, but it's still a moot point whether they will want to click into biographies, or play around with camera angles in, for example, Nimbus's forthcoming DVDs on selected pianists.

On the other hand, DVD won't deal exclusively in visual games.

Sony's spokesman reckons DVD-Audio – when it arrives – will be the ultimate answer to hi-fi dreams. "The reason some people still prefer vinyl to CD – provided they've got a £15,000 turntable – is that CDs cut out all the warmth and ambience of the original recording. DVD-Audio, with its huge digital capacity, will restore that."

Finally I join a band of veteran Gramophone subscribers at a meet-the-DVD-producers solrée. After being zapped with Richter, *Swan Lake* and the latest James Bond, they ask questions. Will DVD make their CD collections redundant? "No. The CD market is in buoyant shape." When will DVDs be available for hire? "Not yet." Will it be possible

to record on them? "Not for a long while yet." When will DVD-Audio hit the shops? "Maybe next year." Is it possible that the whole DVD enterprise will flop? "No way. All the retailers are singing from the same hymn-sheet." That's a relief.

These people are all technofreaks, but it's clear that some are unrepentant laggards. One is a Chinese student who possesses a DV disc but as yet no machine to play it on. He'll wait for the price to fall, and the product to proliferate before buying a machine. "That's fine by me," says a DVD magnate gamely. But, of course, it isn't fine at all. We must clap hands, have faith, and present our credit cards. Otherwise the fairy may not live.

THE COMPACT COLLECTION

ROB COWAN ON THE WEEK'S NEW CD RELEASES

HAVE YOU ever felt that a musical masterpiece is so utterly perfect that it could not possibly have been otherwise? I have, often, and one of my favourites is Mendelssohn's effervescent *Italian* Symphony. But what did the composer himself think of the piece? Not much, apparently. In fact, he completely refashioned the last three movements – and the only reason he didn't revise the first was because he felt prompted to rewrite it completely, but couldn't. Happily for us, Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Vienna Philharmonic have prepared a spirited all-Mendelssohn CD that combines both the original and the revision. In between, there's a nicely sprung account of the *Reformation* Symphony – another work that the fastidious composer had his doubts about.

As to the "revised" *Italian*, first impressions are unfavourable. It all sounds too complex, too contrived – a lissom youngster trying to age prematurely. Mendelssohn had left his original score in London and was revising from memory, so perhaps he remembered wrongly. Or maybe I'm so wedded to the familiar that I am having trouble readjusting to a revision that posterity may well judge as superior. Time will tell.

Time will also sort out the men and women from the boys and girls in the world of Minimalism, but I'll stick my neck out and suggest that when it does, Steve Reich will still be tops. Reich's early maturity yielded a select line-up of masterpieces, with the epic, finely structured *Music for 18 Musicians* as the best of the bunch. Reich and his Musicians made a famous record of it back in the Seventies. Theo there was the 1996 re-make for Nonesuch, and now RCA has released the

first version by a band in which Reich himself is not playing (albeit only for contractual reasons). Ensemble Modern trace the work's hour-long course from the initial throbbing pulses, through 11 related sections that shimmer, shake and shift perspectives almost without your noticing. You can dance to it, enter a trance to it, or sit transfixed by the sheer ingenuity of Reich's creative imagination.

Reich performing Reich is still a popular presence in the record stores, but the unique opportunity of hearing Benjamin Britten conduct Mahler will, for most of us, prove too tempting to miss. BBC Legends has just put out an amazing performance (in mono) of the Fourth Symphony that Britten gave with the LSO in Suffolk in 1961. Britten attends to every strand of scoring with the care of a master draftsman, delving among inner details that are frequently muddled in rival recordings. The first movement is swift and bracing, the second quietly unnerving, the third serenely beautiful, and the fourth touched with innocence. True, there are minor imperfections (the soprano Joan Carlyle anticipates a cue in the finale), but as musical recreations go, none that I can think of is more profoundly affecting. There are perceptively voiced bonuses – both in stereo – in *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, where Britten conducts for Anna Reynolds, and a charming pair of songs from *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* with Elly Ameling as soloist.

Mendelssohn/Gardiner: Deutsche Grammophon 459 156-2
Reich/Ensemble Modern: RCA 09026 68673 2
Mahler/Britten: BBC Legends BBCB 8004-2

Wild things take over the hall

LIVE
LONDON SINFONIETTA/
CBSO
SYMPHONY HALL
BIRMINGHAM

THERE WERE Wild Things loose in Symphony Hall the other night. Not just on stage, where Oliver Knussen's impeccable vocal team, with appetising aplomb, unleashed its chorus of grunts and whoops and hisses and sizzles and groans – but in the bar, where a small apparition aged about five, scudded around adults at waist height, a vision clad in dazzling blues and greens, swirling tartans and garish red moccasins, who might easily have been an escapee from Maurice Sendak's unforgettable double bill.

You could be forgiven for thinking Knussen a bit wild himself, though he is in fact the gentlest of things. He – like his London Sinfonietta – has done as much for promoting the new music of others in this country as anybody. It was thus all the more welcome to hear him expounding his own. His collaborations with Maurice Sendak, *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, inhabit a rich, daunting world of childhood fantasy, in direct descent from the Brothers Grimm, Humperdinck, Ravel (*L'enfant et les Sortilèges*) and Mussorgsky's *Nursery Songs*.

What was so cheering was how well Pig-in-Sandwich-Boards, Cat-Milkman, Castle Yonder and Vanilla Pudding stand up in concert performance, even short of Sendak's looming, garish, monstrous stage décor. If there were moments when Knussen's magic perhaps just failed to crystallise (the car ride, Max's barcarolle, the forest transformation), others – musical clock, the spectacularly gloomy woodwind descent to the cellar, the Firebird-like Ash Tree prelude, the deliciously outrageous "Wild Rumpus" – mesmerised. Both operas are tales of individuation: Jennie, Sendak's dissatisfied Sealyham terrier craves "experience" as much as Max, the petulant child in *Wild Things*, demands adventure. The pathos lies in their conflicting security-craving. Textual audibility is crucial, and (despite oc-

casional over-milking) Knussen was blessed with two ingeniously lucid leads – Cynthia Buchan's Jennie, brilliantly characterised and enunciated across the registers, and Lisa Saffer's mood-changeable Max (plus gloriously obnoxious squealing baby in *Higglety*) fabulously well-phrased. Mary King (Mama), David Wilson-Johnson and Stephen Richardson all had us in stitches in the vignettes.

Rattle's energising CBSO return continues apace. Harrison Birt-



Simon Rattle: his energising return continues apace

Simon Rattle's energising CBSO return continues apace. Harrison Birt-

Simon Rattle's energising CBSO return continues apace. Harrison Birt-

wistle's blasting *Earth Dances*, even with the upper sound chambers closed, tests the Symphony Hall acoustic as well as the eardrums. Bits sear you like shrapnel, flying off door frames, banisters and rafters alike. Some "incident" engages the curiosity more than others, but the real pleasure emerges when Birtwistle eases off and really does "dance", a ghost of a waltz, a sneaky metallic wobble. The late build-up and final dissipation thrilled.

Gubaidulina's optimistic Violin Concerto, *Offertorium*, is a gorgeously contrasted work: the Bachian underlay, a passage of poignant "echoes" (redolent of Schritke), the touchingly Shostakovich-like harmonisations of the chorale with its echoes of the Orthodox rite, and the sheer variety and empathy of Vadim Repin's solo cadenza work all underlined the piece's moral, as well as musical, beauty and strength. The reduced forces in Kurtág's delicate, ritualistic tribute, *Grabstein für Stefan*, elicited sounds from the CBSO as tenderly haunting as anything in the evening.

RODERIC DUNNETT

ON THE AIR

ANTHONY PAYNE

A NUMBER of years ago there was a broadcast of the kind which only seemed possible on BBC Radio 3, giving us a unique opportunity to examine in depth a special aspect of the workings of a composer's mind. What we heard was a rare performance, possibly the first since its premiere, of the early version of Delius's *In a Summer Garden*, and it turned out to be revelatory. The work, in its final shape as most of us know it, is one of the pinnacles of late romantic musical poetics, perfect in all details, utterly unpredictable in structure, yet for a composer who appears to improvise his pieces, astonishingly cogent in its formal dialectic.

What the original version taught

us was that in spite of its incidental riches it lacked tautness, and those who doubt Delius's formal mastery and hear only a meandering progress, might change their minds after observing how ruthlessly the composer cut in essentials and how unwaveringly he retained meaningful asides.

Of all late romantic masters Delius is one of the most deserving of such scrutiny since his methods have rarely been subjected to hard analysis, and have all too often been dismissed as mindless.

In the light of that old broadcast, it was fascinating to explore further the thought processes that make Delius's art uniquely mysterious. The story of how the blind compos-

er set the young Eric Fenby to work on an early piece of his in order to break him in and see what he was capable of, is known to all readers of Fenby's biographical masterpiece *Delius As I Knew Him*. That work was *A Poem of Life and Love*, dating from 1918, and it was eventually to be transformed some 10 years later into *A Song of Summer* with Fenby's aid as amanuensis.

On Tuesday evening both pieces were performed in BBC Radio 3's weekly series *Sound Stories*. In this case it was the characteristics of music written by composers who have reached great old age and the week ended with some of the music Vaughan Williams composed in his eighties. I sometimes think that there is little of musical expression

and structure in composers of young and middle years which cannot be generally understood, but that old age brings to creators a command of such mysteries as can only be fully grasped by those who, too, have left their middle years behind. Such at least seems possible with the movingly distanced vision of Vaughan Williams's Ninth Symphony, whose puzzling finale closed the programme. We feel here that musical symbols from Vaughan Williams's past which once had sensuous impact, have now been fired down and placed in a strangely elliptical context. Perhaps bodily experience was now a matter of memory leaving the spirit in a new relationship with intellect.

Another aspect of creative progress was examined in Radio 3's weekly series *Sound Stories*. In this case it was the characteristics of music written by composers who have reached great old age and the week ended with some of the music Vaughan Williams composed in his eighties. I sometimes think that there is little of musical expression

Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2636 Fax: 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS

BICC rebuffs £379m
Wassall takeover bid

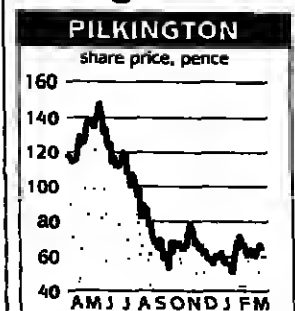
BRIEFING

Deutsche ups cash call to DM6bn

DEUTSCHE BANK said yesterday that it was increasing the size of the rights issue to fund its \$10bn (£6.25bn) purchase of Bankers Trust by 50 per cent to DM6bn (£2.07bn). The German giant said the extra cash would help equip it for "continuing consolidation" in Europe's banking industry.

Chairman Rolf Breuer dampened speculation that the bigger call meant Deutsche would step into the bank bid war in France. There has been talk that Deutsche could partially underwrite BNP's bid for Société Générale. The bank's shares fell 1.23 euros to 50.65 on the cash call news. Net income, including the DM3.2bn windfall dividend from the bank's Daimler-Benz shareholding, tripled to DM3.4bn.

Pilkington restructuring on target



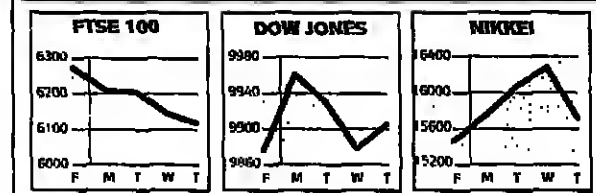
PAOLO SCARONI, chief executive of Pilkington, said yesterday the benefits were coming through from the restructuring of the glass maker's European operations, with margins almost double last year's and prices firm. Demand for float glass in Europe, Pilkington's largest single business area, is running at similar levels to last year, while plant disposals and

closures in Britain and Germany are mostly completed. Mr Scaroni confirmed the group would take a £30m charge in the full year for exchange rate related losses in Poland, Mexico and Brazil.

Goldsmiths bids £44m to go private

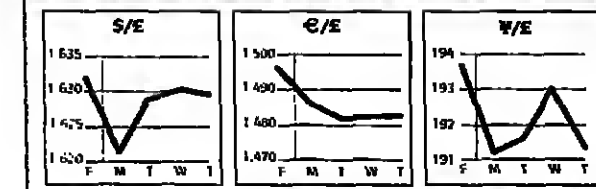
GOLDSMITHS, the jewellery chain, yesterday became the latest company to give up on the stock market when its management launched a £44m bid to take the group private. The management team, led by chief executive Jurek Piasecki and backed by the Alchemy venture capital group, is offering 183p per share. This is a 9 per cent premium over the previous day's closing price but a 63 per cent premium over the price just before Christmas when the management made its first approach.

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Change	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6114.30	-28.30	6369.40	4599.20	2.67
FTSE 250	5463.30	-23.00	5970.90	4247.60	3.12
FTSE 350	2917.50	-12.40	3024.90	2210.40	2.74
FTSE All Share	2625.40	-11.50	2923.83	2143.53	2.78
FTSE SmallCap	2373.80	-1.10	2793.80	1834.40	3.45
FTSE Fledgling	1293.70	-0.90	1517.10	1046.20	4.17
FTSE AIM	847.10	-2.30	1146.90	761.30	1.11
FTSE Europe 100	2677.77	-11.15	3079.27	2018.15	2.66
FTSE Europe 300	1242.43	-3.42	1332.07	880.63	1.96
Dow Jones	9905.77	-24.69	10001.78	7400.30	1.60
Nikkei	15717.92	-59.19	17111.59	12787.90	0.90
Hang Seng	10659.32	-280.73	11926.16	6544.79	3.35
Dax	5013.62	-63.81	6217.89	3833.71	1.73
S&P 500	1306.33	-7.45	1311.11	923.32	1.23
Nasdaq	2440.97	-11.77	2833.44	1351.09	0.28
Tecno 300	6999.80	6.38	7837.70	5320.30	1.81
Brazil Ibovespa	10638.68	3.92	12339.14	4575.69	5.89
Belgium BEL20	3315.17	-27.35	3713.21	2896.26	2.12
Amsterdam Eux	537.59	-2.38	600.65	366.58	1.91
France CAC 40	1523.87	-17.64	1604.94	1281.21	1.74
Italian MIB30	3700.00	361.00	3917.00	2475.00	1.10
Madrid IBS 35	10039.70	-72.40	10999.80	8869.50	1.74
Irish Overall	5296.87	-0.73	5581.70	3732.57	1.57
S Korea KOSPI	578.98	-21.54	651.95	277.87	0.38
Australia ASX	2987.70	-10.10	2996.30	2386.70	3.11

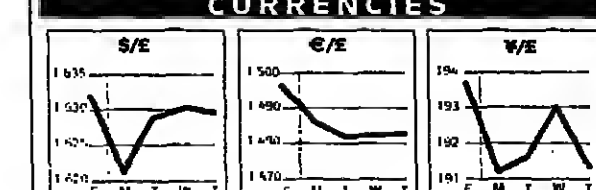
INTEREST RATES



MONEY MARKET RATES

Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.39	-2.17	5.33	-2.26	4.43
US	5.00	-0.89	5.28	-0.50	5.10
Japan	0.18	-0.52	0.22	-0.44	1.80
Germany	3.03	-0.48	3.02	-0.72	3.91

CURRENCIES



BOND YIELDS

Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	10 year	30 year
UK	5.39	-2.17	5.33	-2.26	4.43
US	5.00	-0.89	5.28	-0.50	5.10
Japan	0.18	-0.52	0.22	-0.44	1.80
Germany	3.03	-0.48	3.02	-0.72	3.91

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Change	Yr Ago	Index	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6297	-0.01	1.6699	0.0136	-0.006
Euro	1.4828	+0.28	1.4079	0.9100	-19.25
Yen	191.35	-1.19	212.30	117.43	-90.71
S index	102.50	+0.10	107.50	107.40	-0.20

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.4984	Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.49
Austria (schillings)	19.68	Netherlands (guilders)	3.1537
Belgium (francs)	57.85	New Zealand (\$)	2.9357
Canada (\$)	2.4147	Norway (kroner)	12.25
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8272	Portugal (escudos)	285.40
Denmark (kroner)	10.72	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.9379
Finland (markka)	8.5486	Singapore (\$)	2.6625
France (francs)	9.3933	South Africa (rand)	9.6978
Germany (marks)	2.8080	Spain (pesetas)	237.72
Greece (drachma)	461.27	Sweden (kronor)	12.96
Hong Kong (\$)	1.224	Switzerland (francs)	2.9888
India (rupees)	1.1249	Thailand (bahts)	55.04
Israel (shekels)	62.12	Turkey (liras)	570271
Italy (lira)	6.0579	USA (\$)	1.5920
Japan (yen)	2786		
Malaysia (ringgits)	189.53		
Malta (lira)	5.8647		
	0.6162		

BICC HAS turned down a takeover approach from Wassall, the aggressive venture capital vehicle, which valued the beleaguered construction-to-cables group at £379m.

Wassall last night revealed that it had made the tentative offer, which was pitched at 90p cash for each BICC ordinary share, to BICC's board last Friday. However, BICC rebuffed the approach earlier this week, prompting Wassall to make its tentative approach public.

Chris Miller, Wassall's chief executive, said: "We believe that this proposal should be brought to the attention of BICC shareholders and continue to seek a constructive dialogue with the board of BICC."

Mr Miller said he wanted BICC's shareholders to be aware of Wassall's interest so they could make a decision about whether the price was fair. However, BICC said the offer was inadequate and did not reflect the work that had been done in turning the company around.

Alan Jones, the chief executive, called for Wassall to make a formal offer. "They ought to put their cards on the table and say what they precisely want to do," he said. "I'm sure the shareholders would expect them to do it properly."

BICC is this morning expected to release an official statement to the Stock Exchange explaining why it rejected the offer.

The stock market will this morning have its first opportunity to respond to the news, which was announced after the close of trading yesterday. BICC shares closed down 1.5p at 82p yesterday, while Wassall shares were up 2.5p at 208.5p.

Apart from its cash offer for BICC ordinary shares, Wassall is also proposing to offer £1.10 worth of 10.75 per cent loan stock for each of BICC's 200m convertible preference shares.

Wassall's move follows months of speculation that it was preparing a bid for BICC. The company, which turned it

self from a mini-conglomerate into a venture capital-style vehicle last year, has been building a shareholding in BICC since last autumn. It currently owns more than 9 per cent of BICC.

The bid also comes just six months after Wassall took control of TLG, the lighting group, in a £538m deal after outbidding Cooper Industries, the US diversified electricals group.

Shares in BICC have more than halved in price in the past year, mainly due to sharp price falls and sliding demand for its cables businesses as a result of the Asian crisis and worldwide economic slowdown.

Last week, the group reported a pre-tax loss of £94m for the year to December 1998, compared to a loss of £30m in 1997. Before exceptional profits fell from £10m to £70m.

BICC shareholders have frequently pressured the company to separate its Balfour Beatty construction arm from its cables operations. However, Alan Jones, the chief executive, has constantly rejected this.

Wassall last night insisted that it intended to bid for the whole of BICC. It also stressed it wanted to bid on its own.

However, analysts said that if it succeeded Wassall would be likely to find another buyer for Balfour Beatty, allowing it to concentrate on improving the cables business.

There is enough here to convince the Bank of England the economy needs a bit more of a lift," said Claudiu Burtan, an economist at Deutsche Bank.

Willem Buiter, then member of the Monetary Policy Committee to vote for an interest rate cut earlier this month, said yesterday he favoured moving quickly to a level at which rates would not have to be cut again. However, he added that confidence indicators had improved since January. "There has been a quick turnaround," he said.

Most analysts see the level of borrowing costs falling from the current 5.5 per cent to a trough of 5 per cent or even 4 per cent. Yesterday's statistics showed declines in all categories of sales volumes in February. Year-on-year terms, sales of household goods remain the strongest, up

THE US trade deficit soared to a record \$16.99bn in January as exports of US goods fell and imports of steel and manufactured goods soared.

The bilateral deficit with China showed a particularly big rise, up from \$3.98bn in December to \$4.86bn in February. Steel imports from China jumped by 6 per cent.

The deficit with Japan narrowed from \$3.88bn to \$4.66bn, but the overall trade gap was about \$bn wider than analysts had expected.

The yawning gap between imports and exports is likely to slow US economic growth significantly during the year. Figures on consumer prices showed them rising by just 0.1 per cent in February, taking the annual inflation rate to 1.6 per cent. The benign inflation outlook means the Federal Reserve is expected to leave US interest rates unchanged.

7 per cent thanks to the steady housing market. Department stores are facing poorly, with sales down 2.2 per cent in the year to February. However, the retail sales figures have been erratic. The timing of sales around Christmas and New Year makes them difficult to interpret.

Separately the Bank of England reported a slowdown in the growth of broad money, M4. Its growth rate declined to 7.5 per cent last month.

Both the British Bankers' Association and Building Societies Association reported weak lending in February. Underlying growth in home loans remained buoyant, but Abbey National's securitisation of £2m of mortgages depressed the figure.

Adrian Coles, BSA director general, said a big increase in the number of loans approved signalled the possibility of a spring pick-up in the housing market. Approvals climbed to 1,950 in February, the highest level since September. Other new lending to individuals slowed to £478m in February, well below the recent monthly average.

National Express takes on US school buses

BY PHILIP THORNTON
Transport Correspondent

NATIONAL EXPRESS, the public transport group, is planning an attack on the \$8bn American school bus market as part of a strategy to create an international business.

The group said it was in a strong position and could spend up to £250m "tomorrow" because of its low gearing. It said up to 40 per cent of sales could come from overseas within two years.

Colin Child, the National Express deputy chief executive, said the US school bus network - the country's largest transport system - was ripe for consolidation and privatisation. He said two-thirds of the system was still run by public sector school boards.

"The other third in the private sector is fragmented and run by 5,000 'mom and pop' organisations," he said.

Last September National Express bought two operators



Phil White, National Express chief executive, and Colin Child (behind), deputy chief executive Magali Delporte

with 1,750 buses, making it the US's fifth largest operator. Mr Child said National Express had been attracted to the US, and to Australia where it is bidding for rail franchises, because of the common language and similar legal and accountancy standards.

Within two years, up to 40 per cent of turnover would come from overseas, including 30 per cent from the US from the current zero position.

The expansion plans were revealed as the group, with interests in trains, airports, buses and coaches, announced a 77 per cent surge in annual profits for 1998 to £97m from £54.8m.

Operating profits before exceptional costs rose 14.4 per cent to £95.6m (£83.6m). The

total dividend was 16p per share, up from 13.5p.

Much of the progress was attributed to the inclusion of a full year performance for three train operating companies acquired in 1997 - Central Trains, ScotRail and Silverlink.

Together with the Gatwick Express and Midland Main Line, the division saw turnover steam ahead to £918m and prof-

its rise 31.5 per cent to £25.9m. Passenger growth ranged from 5 to 15 per cent on different routes, with passenger numbers up 7.5 per cent to 137 million.

Mr White said National Express planned to ask the Government to extend its franchise terms for Central, ScotRail and Silverlink beyond their current seven years.

Rover crashes £650m into red

BY PHILIP THORNTON

HUGE RESTRUCTURING costs sent the Rover car company deep into the red last year, according to figures yesterday.

Rover made a loss of around DM1.87bn (£850m) compared with a loss of £91m in 1997. Its German owner BMW disappointed analysts with a 27 per cent fall in net profits to DM903m.

BMW said the sharp rise in losses at Rover was a result of "model changes, market and currency factors and the restructuring measures".

The figures came as BMW executives examined details of the Government's offer of grants aimed at securing the future of Rover's Longbridge plant, which employs 12,000 people.

BMW is debating where to build the production site for the successor to the Rover 200 and 400 series mid-range car. It has submitted grant applications to

both the UK and Hungarian governments.

Stephen Byers, Trade and Industry Secretary, confirmed that he had finalised a "complex" package in time for BMW's board meeting yesterday. The subsidy package is believed to amount to £180m. He expects further talks with BMW in the next few weeks.

Tony Woodley, chief car industry negotiator for the Transport and General Workers trade union, said he was confident that BMW would choose Britain.

"Fifty to sixty thousand jobs depend on this decision, and of course the company understands that and the British government understands that," he said.

Industry sources said they did not expect an announcement until the middle of next week.

GKN links with Agusta to form helicopter giant

BY ANDREW VERITY

GKN, the industrial group, yesterday announced details of a deal to combine its Westland division with Agusta of Italy to create a new European helicopters group.

Westland is to link up with Agusta, a division of the Italian industrial group Finmeccanica, in a 50-50 joint venture. David Wright, an executive director of GKN, will become the chairman.

The deal is likely to delight Michael Heseltine, who first tried to combine Westland with a European group when he was defence secretary in the mid-1980s.

Mr Heseltine resigned after the plan was blocked by the then prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who favoured a US rescue.

GKN yesterday stressed that far from being a rescue, Westland and Agusta would form the second largest helicopter manufacturer in the world.

Together they will form one of the world's premier helicopter companies with a broad range of civil and defence products, a strong order book and an exciting programme of new products and technologies," it said in a statement with Finmeccanica.

The deal marks another step forward in the consolidation of the defence and aerospace industries, leaving Europe with just two helicopter manufacturers - Westland/Agusta and Eurocopter, a consortium led by the French group Aerospatiale.

Mr Wright said further European deals could be in the offing. He declined to rule out a tie-up with Eurocopter - a move that would put Boeing, the world's biggest helicopter maker, on the back foot.

Executives have taken nearly a year to thrash out details of the deal after announcing the plan in April last year. Yesterday they named Amedeo Caporaletti, president of Agusta, as chief executive of Westland, will be managing director.

More than 4,800 staff will be transferred to the new company, which already has an order book of £2.3bn. A surge in new orders led the group to recruit 500 staff in the last year.

The companies have already worked together to develop the EH101, a three-engine, 15-tonne helicopter used by the Royal Navy. A total of 98 EH101s have been ordered by the Royal Air Force, the Italian Navy, the Canadian Armed Forces and a customer in Japan.

Analysts welcomed the deal but said more consolidation was needed. "There are still too many [helicopter groups] across the world," said one.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

LONDON BLUE-CHIP shares yesterday closed lower for the fifth consecutive session, hit by profit-taking and worries over the expiry of option contracts.

The FTSE 100 index fell 26.3 to 6,114.3, with many buyers remaining on the sidelines ahead of today's expiry of the March options series, one of the stock market's traditional bugbears. The smaller indices also came under selling pressure, with the FTSE 250 falling 2.3 to 5,463.3 and the FTSE 350 ending 1.1 lower at 2,917.5.

Market Report, page 21

NEW YORK

STOCKS CLUNG to thin gains in late morning trading, with transport and banks highlighting otherwise lacklustre trade.

Analysts kept the 10,000 Dow threshold in mind, even though the market held below 9,900 for most of the morning. Any signs of a rally were stifled by bouts of profit taking ahead of today's derivative expiries.

As European bourses closed, the Dow average was up 17.5 points at 9,896.9. The Nasdaq was up 7.9 at 2,446, and the S&P 500 was up 5.6 points at 1,303.

TOKYO

THE NIKKEI 225 index closed more than 3 per cent down at 15,717.9 amid concern that the benchmark index's recent rise had been excessive.

Traders said Sony and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi bore the brunt of the profit taking, which intensified towards the close. The heavyweights both fell over 4 per cent.

Buying by foreign investors was the driving force behind the recent rally in the Nikkei average, spurred by hopes Japanese companies are taking long-awaited restructuring steps to steer themselves and the economy back to recovery.

PARIS

THE CAC 40 closed down 0.42 per cent at 4,152, after earlier falling as low as 4,093. France Telecom weighed on the blue chip index, falling sharply after announcing flat profits for 1998, despite predictions that deregulation across Europe's telecom markets would boost profits this year.

LYMEX rose 4.85 per cent after the luxury brands group said with its 1998 results that the worst of the Asian crisis was behind it, while Renault climbed 1.9 per cent as worries over its planned tie-up with Nissan receded.

THE BLUE-CHIP Xetra has closed down 0.73 per cent at 5,058.8, just above the psychologically important 5,000 point level, amid light trade and uncertainty ahead of option expiries today.

Deutsche Bank led the decliners, falling over 3 per cent after it announced a larger than expected capital increase to fund its Bankers' Trust acquisition, while Dresdner Bank fell 1.8 per cent on profit taking after its recent rise on the back of its French partner BNP's bid for SocGen and Paribas.

FRANKFURT

THE BLUE-CHIP Xetra has closed down 0.73 per cent at 5,058.8, just above the psychologically important 5,000 point level, amid light trade and uncertainty ahead of option expiries today.

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هذا من الأصل

Channel 5

TELEVISION REVIEW



3.25 Children's B&C: Playdys (R) (S) (6277089) 3.45
Spider (R) (S) (5065677) 3.60 Smert on the Road (S)
(T) (961650) 4.00 Playdys (R) (S) (607722) 4.30
L and K Fiday (S) (T) (3945900) 4.55 Newround
Extra (S) (T) (5488919) 5.10 Blue Peter (S) (T)
(9203894).

3.35 Melbours. You could be out of the bag just
compition, whatever that is (32529).

8.00 Newel Wseether (T) (336).

3.20 Children's TV: Monkeys Shop (#6878) **3.30** Timbino (#6917), **3.35** Animal Stories (A) (S) (#690729), **3.48** Big Bird (T) (#68857), **4.00** Pump It Up (T) (#67174), **4.35** Corni Acini (S) (T) (#694567).

5.00 Home and Away (S) (T) (#426).

B.30 Dream Toke! Mosaic and candle-making workshops; the culture of South Korea, and an herbalist guide to Valencia. (890).

B.00 London Tonight. Regional news update for the capital and the South-East (T) (703).

3.30 FIMB **A Change of Place** (Donna Dailch 1994)
J/S/Cat/Ger! A successful model persuades her bookish twin sister to change places with her on the Paris catwalks. Andrea Roth takes both roles. The director, Donna Dailch, made that excellent lesbian romance, *Dress/Hears*. Presumably, this gig paid her more (\$40,000).

6.30 Regional News. And weather (T) (887).

7.00 Weekend Hitchhiking with Anne Robinson. A new series, which tonight kicks off with a look at the increasingly popular hitchhiker destination of Cuba (S) (272).

7.30 Top of the Pops. Boyzone's Comic Relief appeal tops a second week at Number One. They're joined by Steps, Roatina, Trade and REM (S) (T) (871).

8.00 Ground Force. A change for the garden-maintenance programme, as it reveals a question that the team haven't asked in a few years: back to sea or not it's falling now (S) (T) (882).

B.30 The Builders. Continuing the bricks docu-soap. The main gaffer is being questioned by Jonathan Dixon, as the concrete battles fail to turn up (S) (T) (227).

5.30 ITV Evening Novel Weather (T) (15s).

7.00 Emmerdale. Scott and Roy square up over Kelly, and Chris declares war on Sean Reynolds. (S) (T) (7850).

7.30 Coronation Street. Nick confides the worries to Mervin, while Gary and Judy's night out hits flat (S) (T) (607).

8.00 Parking Wars. ITV's fascination with all types of rage continues with stories of arguments (and worse) that have flared up over parking spaces (S) (T) (3859).

8.30 Days Like These. Flop attempt to apologise an American sitcom. A relaxed family Sunday is shattered by the arrival of Flop's mother-in-law (S) (T) (2345).

8.30 Family Affairs. What has happened between Gaiety and Patsy? I've no idea either. (S) (T) (206357).

7.00 Knight Rider. David Hasselhoff is talking to his car again. (871842).

7.30 Nature of Oz. Mael the laugh-a-minute kookaburra of Australia. Quite a nifty angler as well, apparently. (S) (T) (208365).

6.00 Was it Good for You? Differing experiences of Catalonia, Spain. (S) (989807).

6.30 Nick's Quest. Nick Baker visits Playa Grande in Costa Rica, where the world's largest reptiles come ashore to bask in the sun. (S) (989808).

9 PM

8.30 News Regional News; Weather (T) (253).

E.30 Parkhouse. Michael Parkhouse meets Jack Dee. Will he be able to place the comedians' deepest front? (S) (74877).

10.30 E!TV Another 48 Hrs (Walter Hill 1980 US). You can't argue with the title. A double bill of films starring Nick Nolte begins with this belated and positively re-released 1980 thriller. The second film is the original 1982 action thriller, 48 Hours. Nolte again teams up with Eddie Murphy, who was in enough of a creaky spin to be tempted back to material that had helped to make the name. The old-fashioned pair have

8.00 Britain's Worst Cheats. Featuring fans dodging on trains, a charity swindle, how to cheat at cards, and how to tell when people are lying (T) (9165).

10.00 Briming Mr and Mrs with Julian Clary. The camp one-up update the ancient game show. See *Game Show of the Day*, below (T) (22797).

10.30 Pleasure Island. Kelly Burke narrates the vaguely depressing documentary about holidaymakers at the idyllic resort of Funchal in II ("The World's sexiest adult resort," as it's billed as it sounds (T) (32685).

11.00 TTV Mighty Newel Weather (T) (932109).

8.00 **FILM** *Evidence of Love* (Stephen Gyllenhaal 1980 US). Barbara Hershey plays Candy Morrison, an apparently perfect member of her small Texas community. And then she goes and gets charged with killing a fellow church-goer with an axe, striking her 41 times. This based-on-real-events drama was directed by Stephen Gyllenhaal, who went on to make *Parkes Travel*, and co-stars Hal Holbrook, and Brian Dennehy as Hershey's (S) (T) (R) (B) (V) (D) (K).

12.00 PHOEBE Blue Jeans (William Fieldin 1994 US). Nick Nolis plays the baseball coach having the old-fashioned valiant put to the test by big money. *Saga File of the Day*. (Followed by *Weather*) (T) (3/25/96).

1.45 Johns BBC News 24 (4/30/93). To 7am.

GAME SHOW OF THE DAY

MIR AND MIRA WITH JULIAN CLARY (10pm TV, *night*) The much-loved game show *Mir and Mira*, in which married couples were tested on their knowledge of each other is resurrected with Julian Clary in the Derek Bailey role. Out go the cranes and ornaments of *Darcel*. Television's 1970s set - and in come the


THE DAY

4, 4pm A pleasantly
match along with roots in
Day Today's new realism,
people from the material
born from *Goodhouse* *Architecture*

12.35 **Film** *Shattered Dreams* (Robert Irvine 1980 US).
After years of abuse, the wife of a top Washington
official summons up the strength to leave him. Lindsay
Weirner stars (S) (T) (28394-6).

2.15 **Club@Vision** (2872655). **3.40** Box Office America (F)
(2045154). **3.25** The Haunted Flank (1204407).
3.55 *Thana* (3087827). **4.58** ITV Nightscreen (3103933).
To 6.50am.

BLUE
films the
double
Award
film, but



1:30 FILM *Follow the Fleet* (Mark Sandrich, 1939 US). Buoyant Astaire and Rogers musical — the one featuring "Let's Face the Music and Dance" (6085759).

3:30 FILM *The Texas Rangers Ride Again* (740). Western starring John Howard (R2389468), to 4:00am.

TELEVISION GUIDE BY CEMADU GILBERT

Channel 4

Channel 5

6.00 5 Name and Breed (20536349), **7.00 Wildcove World** (R) (S) (T) (8628347), **7.50 The World's Best** (S) (T) (8628347), **7.50 Wilmar's Show** (R) (8636900), **8.00 The World's Best** (S) (T) (8628347), **8.00 Natchy Lane** (R) (S) (T) (255350), **8.25 Russell Grant's Possums** (4155648), **8.30 The Orphan Whirlwind Show** (R) (8465857), **10.20 Surges Bazaar** (8588890), **11.00 Laeza** (S) (9645496), **12.00 5 Stars at Noon** (S) (T) (2552626), **12.30 Family Affairs** (S) (T) (8630838), **1.00 The Bold and the Beautiful** (S) (T) (863272), **1.30 The Roseanne Show** (S) (933106), **2.00 100 Per Cent Gold** (S) (9898338), **2.30 God Almighty** (S) (1943428).

3.30 **EW** *A Change of Place* (Donna Daulton 1994)
JS/Cent/Gen A successful model persuades her bookish twin sister to change places with her on the Paris catwalks. Andrew Roth takes both roles. The director, Donna Daulton, made that excellent lesbian romance, *Desert Heat*. Presumably, the glib paid her *mid*(99a) (\$54.02/3).

5.20 **5** *News* (S) (T) *(WY/B7/MT)* **5.2B** Russell Grant's *Pothead* (S) (75/47/78) **5.30** 100 Per Cent (S) (2/55/50/69).

B.00 **5** *News* Early including First on Five (S) (7

8.30 Family Affairs. What has happened between Gaby and Peter? I've no idea either. (S) (T) (205357).

7.00 Knight Rider. David Hasselhoff is talking to the car again. (8718425).

7.30 Nature of Oz. Mael has laugh-a-minute kookaburras of Australia. Quite a nifty angler as well, apparently. (S) (T) (208965).

B.00 Was it *Good for You?* Differing experiences of Catalonia, Spain (S) (1998024).

B.30 Nick's *Cheest*. Nick Baker visits Playa Grande in Costa Rica, where the world's largest reptiles come ashore to lay their eggs (S) (1) (607106).

B.00 **[FAM]** Evidence of Love (Stephen Gyllenhaal 1990 US). Barbara Hershey plays Candy Morton, an apparently perfect member of the small town.

0.50 Lexn - the Dark Zone Stories (fb) (S) (725144),
killing a fellow church member and a gay minister with
himself. This based-on-real-events drama was directed by
Stephen Gyllenhaal, who went on to make *Paris Trout*,
and co-starre Hal Holbrook, and Brian Dennehy as
Hearney's (S) (7) (658000263).

1.50 **FILM** *Fellow the Fleet* (Merr. Sandrich 1939 US).
Eloquent Astaire and Rogers musical - the one featuring
"Let's Face the Music and Dance" (R085759).

3.50 **FILM** *The Texaco Rensselaire Race Again* (1940).
Western starring John Howard (R2398469), to 4.00am.

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FILM OF THE DAY

